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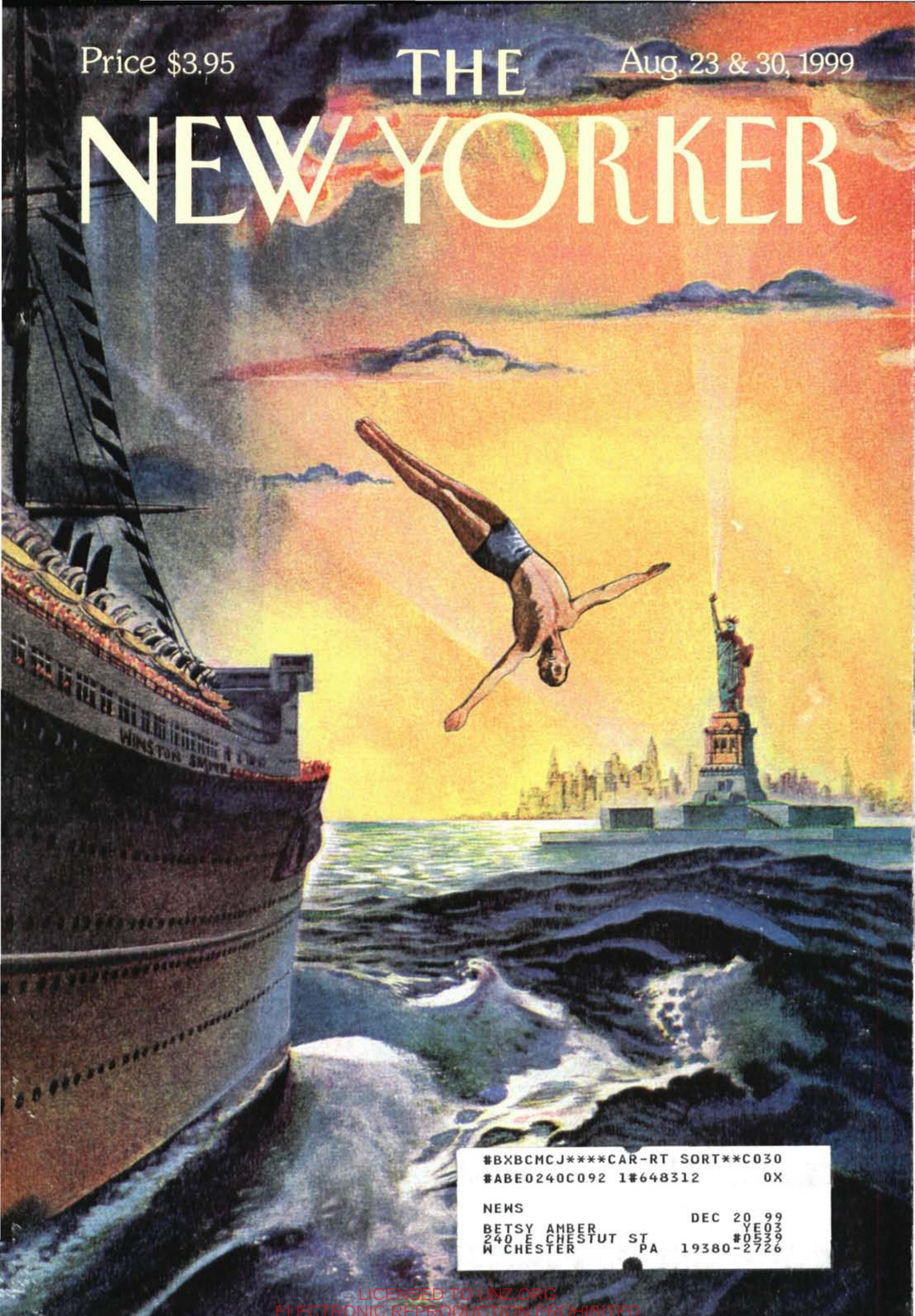
Aug. 23 & 30, 1999



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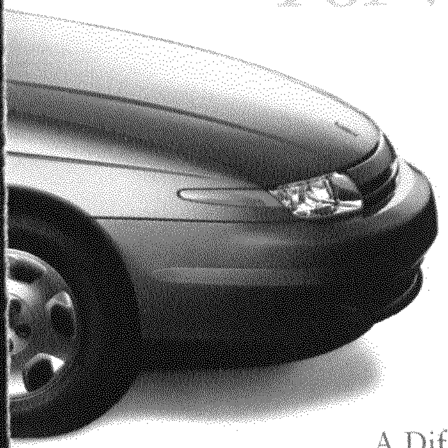

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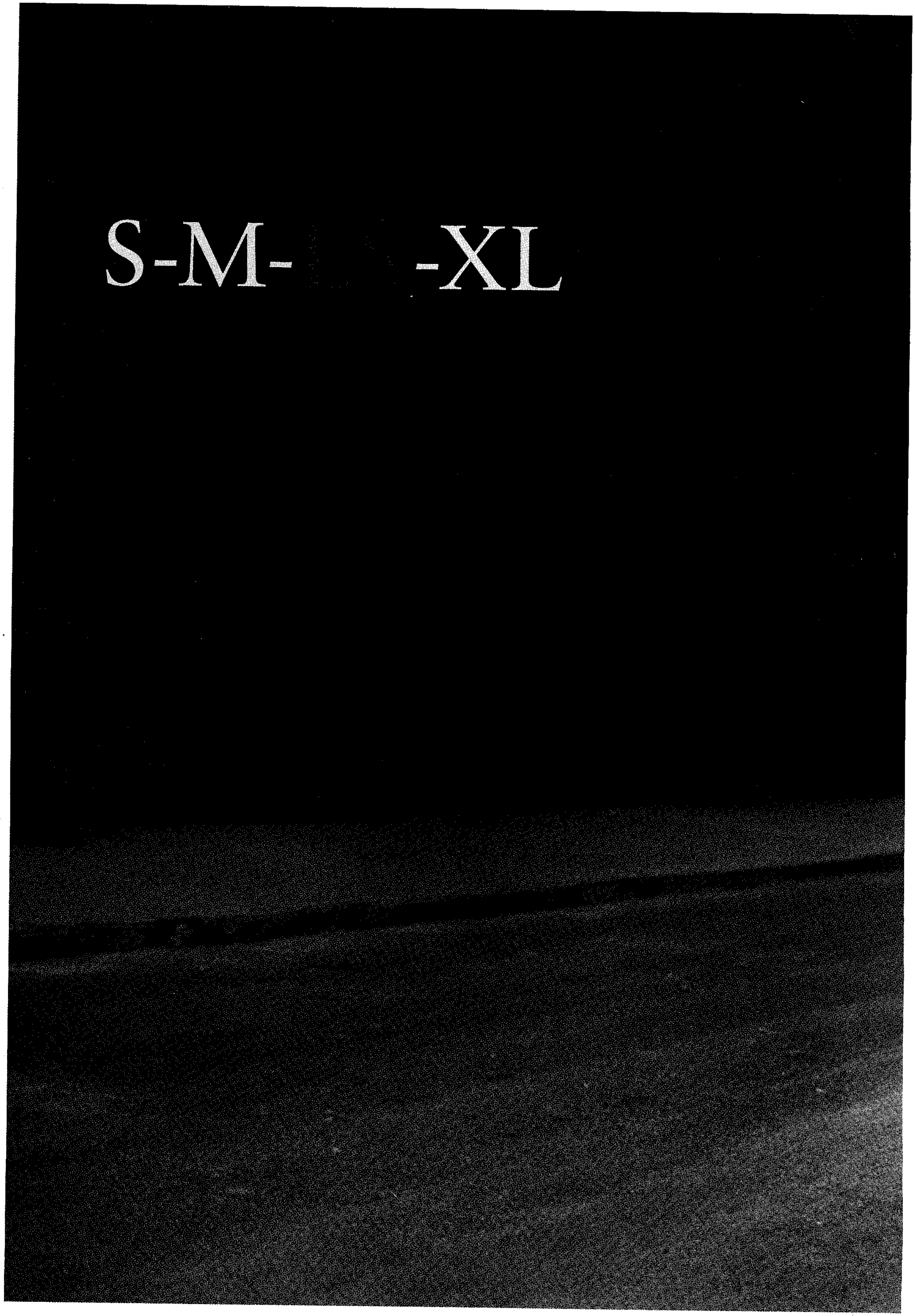

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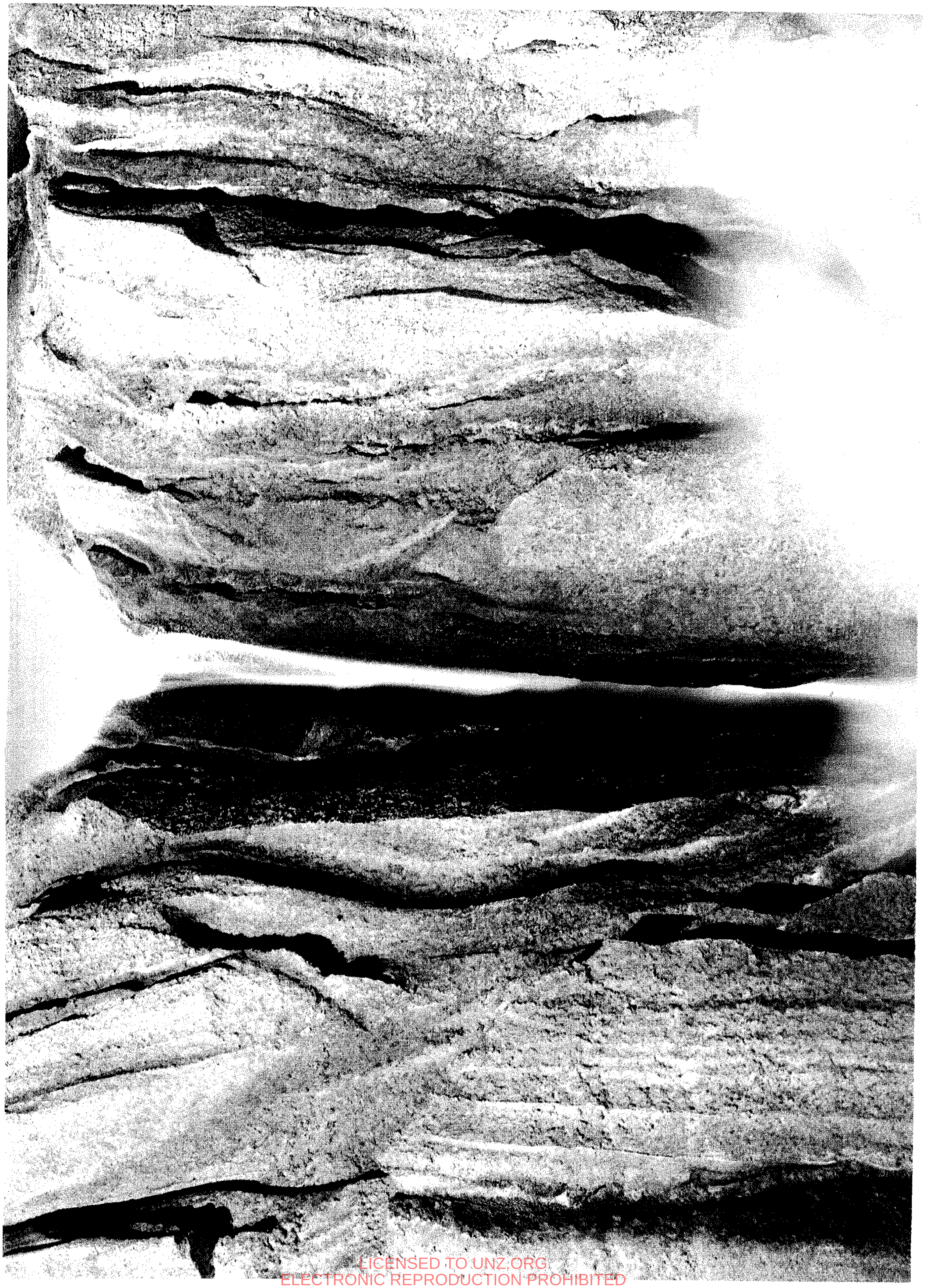

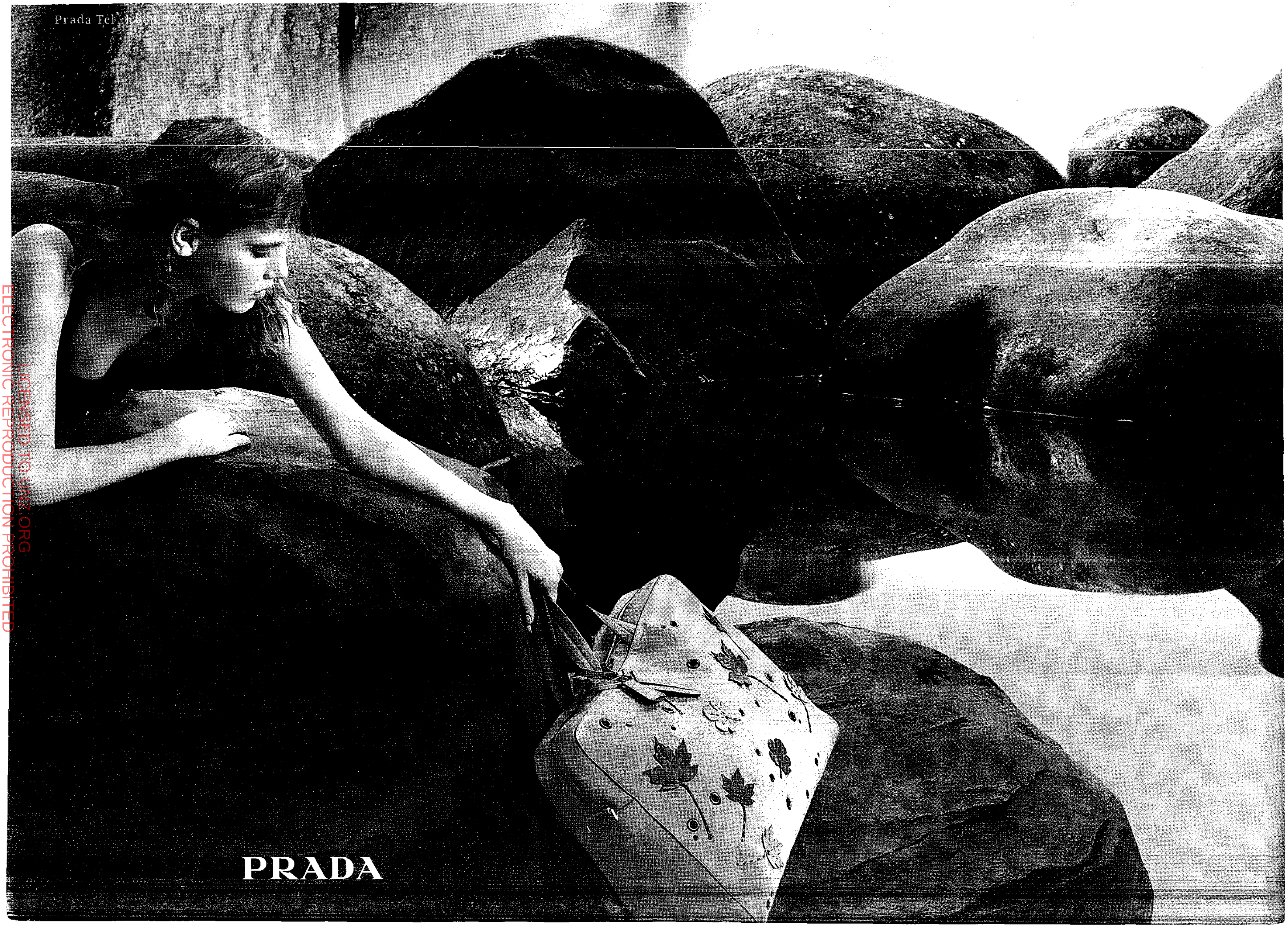
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THE ADVENTURE ISSUE

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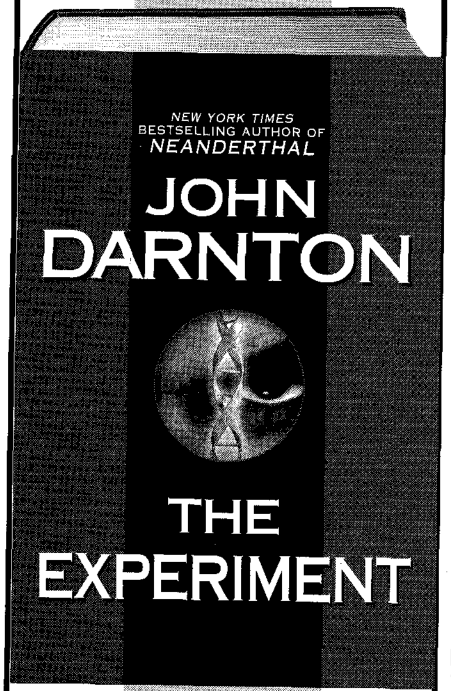
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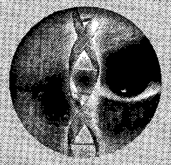

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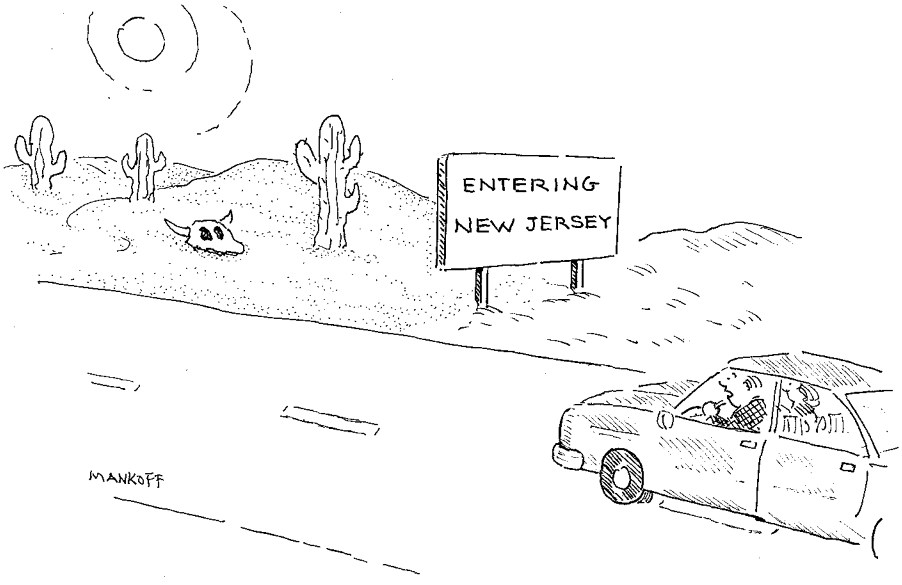

"I had no idea it was this serious."

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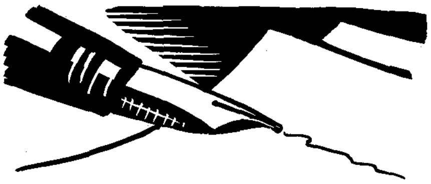

THE CAMERA LENS

I am not a sentimentalist. And, being at the early end of Generation X, I am a member of the generation that has seen it all and is cynical about the media—news footage, especially. But Gilles Peress's pictures (Portfolio, "Exile and Return," July 19th) do not lie. Perhaps, as Philip Gourevitch writes in his accompanying text, it is because "none of the people in these pictures appear to notice the camera" that these photographs begin to cut through our culture of voyeuristic montage. Perhaps it is because in the one photograph in which Peress's subjects do confront the camera they do so with supreme distrust and disdain, as if they were confronting the apathy that the rest of the world showed them for so long. The photograph of "that corpse on the road near Xerxe" is the truest depiction of war—the waste, the filth, and the facelessness of it—that I have ever seen.

William J. Smith
Portland, Ore.

GENIUS IS AS GENIUS DOES?

Malcolm Gladwell's "The Physical Genius" (August 2nd) made me wonder why we readily accept that physical prowess is the combination of a number of talents while intellectual achievement requires that we be born with "the right stuff." Gladwell's physical geniuses, in addition to possessing some intangible innate gifts, spend incredible amounts of time and effort practicing surgical skills, athletic feats, or musical performances. They expend enormous amounts of energy to marginally improve their skills. But we expect that with academics children will either get it or they won't ("I'm just not good at math"), and that they can become expert readers, mathematicians, and writers while expending comparatively little effort. We can't all become intellectual geniuses with enough work—after all, no amount of hockey practice will turn me into Wayne Gretzky. But what if children were encouraged to approach academic learning in the same spirit in which they approach physical activity?

Susan M. Fitzpatrick
Elizabeth City, N.C.

Mr. Gladwell's article reminded me of another *New Yorker* essay on the imaginative planning and visualization involved in acts of physical genius. In a piece on rap and poetry ("Sudden Def," June 19, 1995), Henry Louis Gates, Jr., explained that "not only does spontaneity require practice but it can take time to arrive at immediacy; and when you do, it's not something to dismiss." This was precisely the formula for being a Renaissance courtier: one had to mix "sprezzatura," the ability to speak as if on the spur of the moment and with a sense of timing and humor, with "mediocrità," practice and knowledge. In contemporary culture, the courtier could be a rap star; he, and the performing geniuses Gladwell mentions—surgeons, musicians, and athletes—have a spontaneous connection to and feel for their tools. Maybe all aspiring surgeons should also study music, poetry, and courtly conversation.

Craig Saper
Bala Cynwyd, Pa.

EUSTACE'S YIDDISH LESSON

I believe that the meanings of "schlemiel" and "schlimazel" were reversed in the answers to the New York Aptitude Test (The Mail, August 9th). "Mazel" means "luck" in Yiddish, and that is what the schlimazel lacks. A schlemiel is a bungling fool who may, since he can't help himself, also be considered a schlimazel. As is stated in the noted author and Yiddishist Leo Rosten's "The Joys of Yiddish," "A shlemiel is a man who is always spilling hot soup down the neck of a shlimazel." Rosten doesn't say if it's chicken soup, but I'm willing to bet it is. With matzo balls.

Mimi Sheraton
New York City

•

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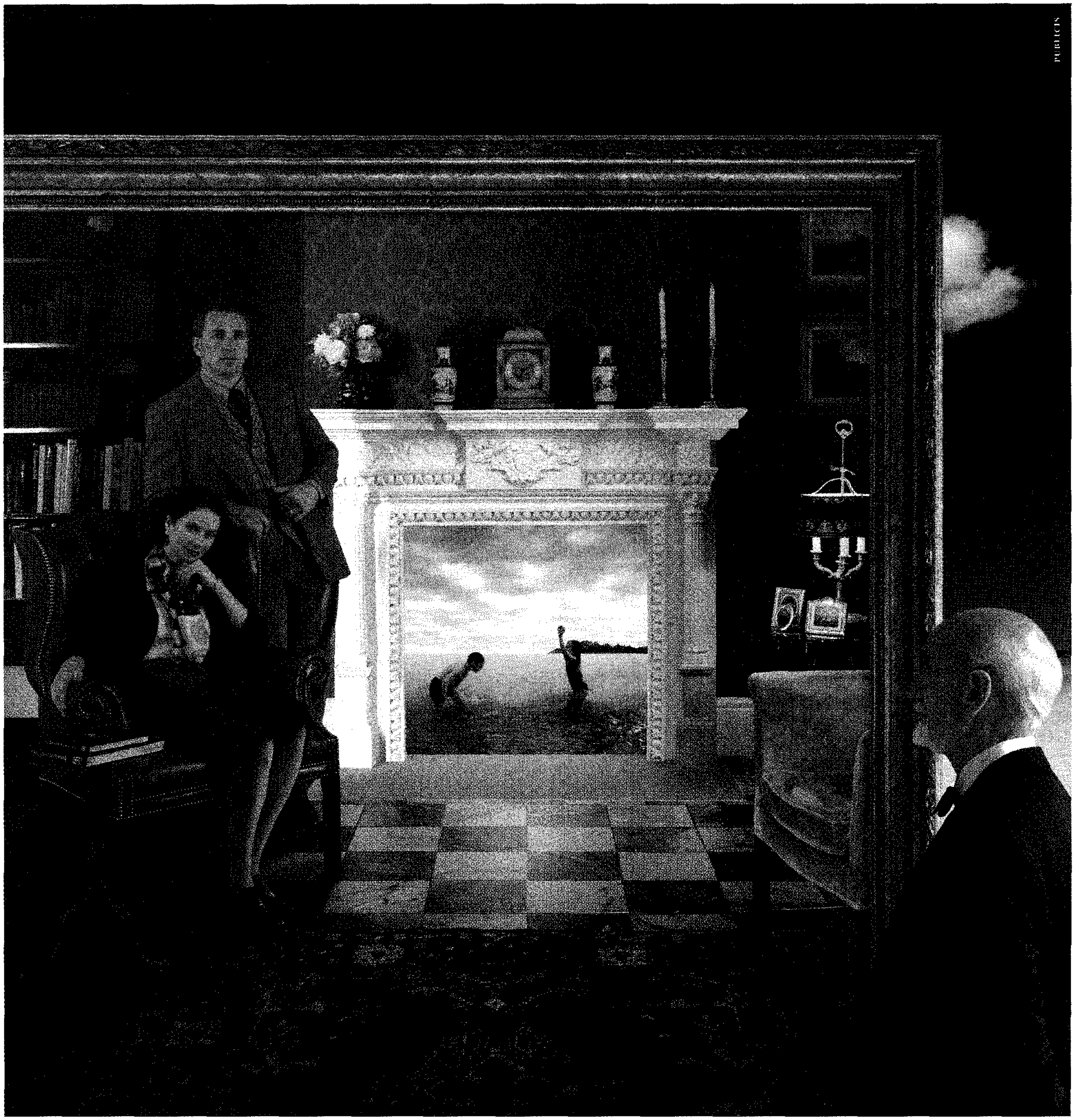

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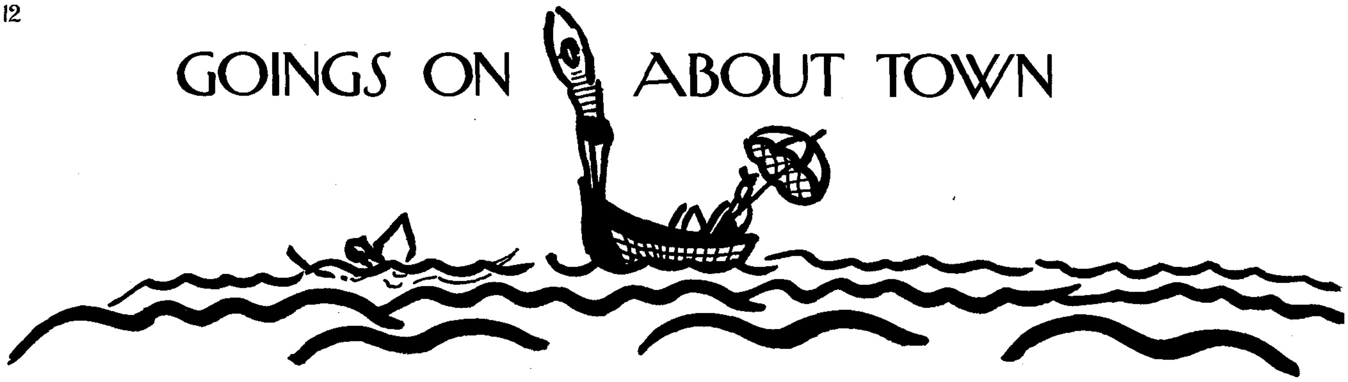


THE THEATRE

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.)

Hazelle: To the Top, Top, Top!—In her one-woman comedy, set in a New York City neighborhood, Hazelle Goodman portrays a number of characters looking for ways to fulfill their dreams. Preview on Aug. 18. Opens Aug. 19 at 8:30 and continues, Wednesdays and Thursdays, through Sept. 2. (Joe's Pub, 425 Lafayette St. 539-8770.)

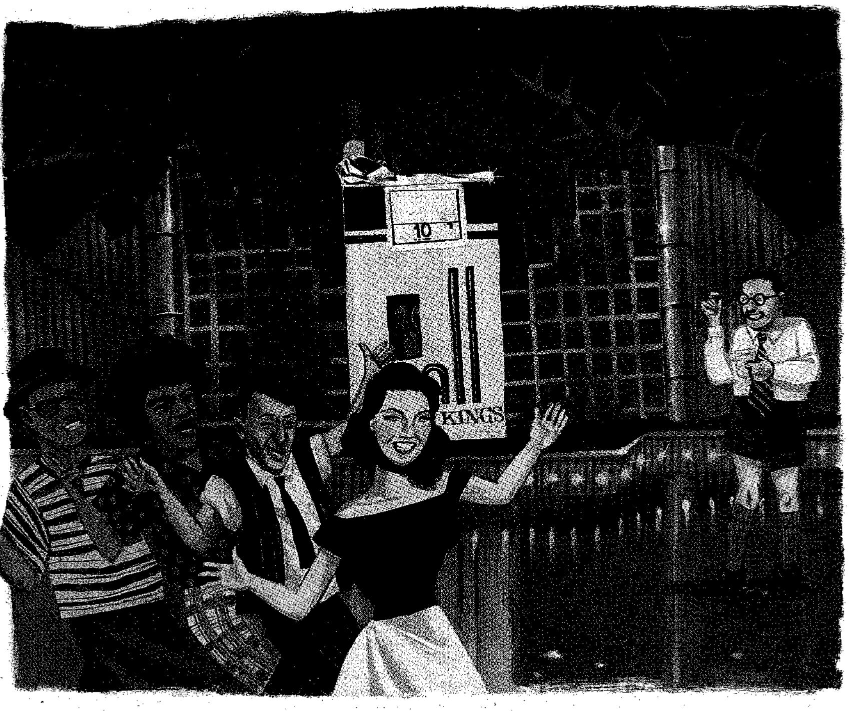
It's My Party (and I'll Die If I Want To)—F. Murray Abraham leads a cast that includes Joyce Van Patten and Adam Grupper, in a dysfunctional-family comedy by Elizabeth Coleman. Preview on Aug. 18. Opens Aug. 19 at 8. (ArcLight, 152 W. 71st St. 307-4100.)

Jean Cocteau Repertory—The company opens its season with Tom Stoppard's 1981 comedy "On the Razzle," directed by Scott Shattuck. Preview on Aug. 20. Opens Aug. 21 at 3. (Bouwerie Lane Theatre, 330 Bowery, at Bond St. 677-0060.)

Kat and the Kings—A rock-and-roll musical by Taliep Petersen and David Kramer, set in Cape Town in 1957, about a doo-wop group trying to make it big. Mr. Kramer is the director. Two previews on Aug. 18. Opens Aug. 19 at 6:45. (Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

New York International Fringe Festival—A fortnight of experimental, multidisciplinary, and multimedia performances at numerous downtown venues. The acts include Osaka, Japan,'s Gumbo (in "Reverse World"), New York City's Juggernaut Theatre Company (in "Gertrude Stein's Picasso), Warsaw's Omar Sangare (in "Juliet"), and Chicago's Antonio Sacre (in "My Penis"). Aug. 18-29. (For tickets, performance times, and information about other events, call 420-8877 or 888-374-6436.)

Tartuffe—Mark Brokaw directs Dylan Baker, Dana Ivey, J. Smith-Cameron, Charles Kimbrough, Wendell Pierce, and Mary Testa in Molière's comedy, New York Shakespeare Festival's second outdoor production of the season. In previews through Aug. 21. Opens Aug. 22 at 8 and continues through Sept. 5. (Delacorte Theatre, Central Park near W. 81st St. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 539-8750.)



"Kat and the Kings," a musical by Taliep Petersen and David Kramer.

ZOHAR LAZAR

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OPENED RECENTLY

Benten Kozo—Traditional Kabuki meets Jackie Chan in a terrific evening concocted by director Jim Simpson and his Bat Theatre Company. The show runs in repertory with Erin Courtney's dark comedy, "Mother's Couch," which is performed Fridays and Saturdays at 11 P.M. (Flea Theatre, 41 White St. 226-0051. Closes Aug. 28.)

Blueprint Series—The Ontological Theatre's annual festival for emerging directors, presenting works staged by Natalia de Campos, Owen Hughes, Kevin Oakes, and Shilarna Stokes. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 533-4650. Closes Aug. 22.)

The Brave—The Scottish playwright Sharman Macdonald's 1988 thriller, set in North Africa, about two sisters who become fugitives when one of them kills an attacker in self-defense. From the Goldthread Theatre Company. (Atlantic, 336 W. 20th St. 947-8844. Closes Aug. 22.)

Closer—Patrick Marber's slick dissection of the anatomy of desire. (Reviewed in our issue of 4/5/99.) (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 239-6200. Closes Aug. 22.)

The Countess—A drama by Gregory Murphy, about the tangled relationship between the nineteenth-century art critic John Ruskin, his wife, and Ruskin's protégé John Everett Millais. (Samuel Beckett, 410 W. 42nd St. 594-2826. Closes Aug. 29.)

Dear Liar—Marian Seldes and Donal Donnelly portray Mrs. Patrick Campbell and George Bernard Shaw, in a drama that Jerome Kilty based on letters written during the forty-year clandestine love affair between the actress and the playwright. (Irish Repertory Theatre, 132 W. 22nd St. 727-2737.)

Eugene O'Neill Festival—The second season in a five-year undertaking of O'Neill's œuvre by Playwrights Theatre. Aug. 18-21 at 7:30: "Servitude." . . . ¶ Aug. 24-28 at 7:30: "The Sniper." . . . ¶ Aug. 31 at 7:30: "The Personal Equation." Continues through Sept. 12. (Provincetown Playhouse, 133 Macdougal St. For information about tickets, call 998-5801.)

The Gathering—A Shabbat dinner set during the spring of Reagan's controversial visit to Bitburg (the German cemetery where, it is believed, Nazi soldiers are buried) turns into political crossfire between a Dachau survivor (Theodore Bikel) and his son (Robert Fass), who is a speechwriter for the President. It could have been a sombre, if not overly burdened, affair, if not for the comic tone of the tightly scripted first act. The mood slows to a more ponderous pace in the second. (Playhouse 91, at 316 E. 91st St. 239-6200.)

If Love Were All—Twiggy and Harry Groener star as Gertrude Lawrence and Noël Coward, in this appealing revue-cum-reminiscence by Sheridan Morley; the pair sing some twenty Coward songs and portray, with sweetness and without sentimentality, the remarkable lifelong friendship between the two, who met when Noël was twelve and Gertie fourteen. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 239-6200.)

I'm the One That I Want—The comedian Margaret Cho tells the story of her disastrous descent into Hollywood, as the first Asian-American to have her own sitcom. (Westbeth Theatre Center, 151 Bank St. 307-4100.)

It Ain't Nothin' But the Blues—A marvellous collection of songs performed by a dynamic cast. The music alone could have showcased the influence of the blues, but instead the audience is subjected to explanatory notes and bad-talk-show banter. Fortunately, the blues triumphantly survives even

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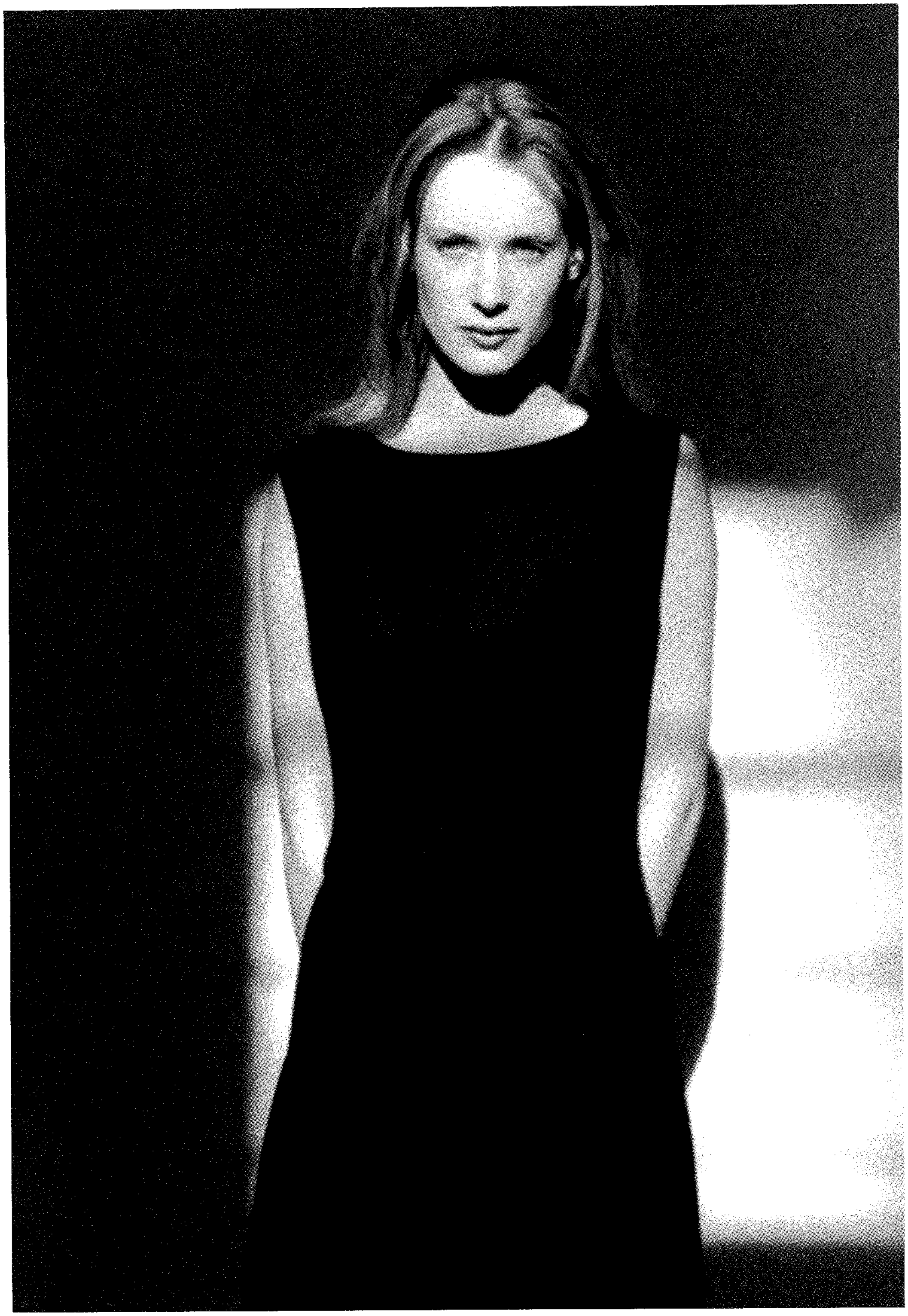


GIORGIO ARMANI
LE COLLEZIONI

KABUKI, BENT: *The Japanese theatrical form of Kabuki traditionally follows such rigid, arcane rules that most Westerners just don't get it. By traditionally following no rules at all, the Bat Theatre Company, a one-year-old troupe tucked away in Tribeca, has opened up Kawatake Mokuami's rarely produced nineteenth-century play "Benten Kozo." You'd expect the collision of Kabuki and Tribeca to result in mutual annihilation, but Jim Simpson and his company—weaving strands of Jackie Chan, Las Vegas lounge singing, and East Village fashion (circa 1984) into the melodramatic plot—have come up with a vivid, funky, and unpretentious evening. The Bat has created a thriving artistic community by being unusually wide-ranging in their programming: an earlier hit this season included Irene Worth and Peter Eyre reading the letters of George Sand and Gustave Flaubert.*

ANDREA ARTZ

this. (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200. The show closes here on Aug. 29 and moves to the Ambassador on Sept. 9.)

Jar the Floor—Irma P. Hall, Linda Powell, Regina Taylor, Lynne Thigpen, and Welker White portray five members (representing four generations) of a black family, who gather for the ninetieth birthday of the great-grandmother, in a drama by Cheryl L. West. Marion McClinton is the director. (Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St. 246-4422.)

The Joy Luck Club—Susan Kim's adaptation of the Amy Tan novel, staged by the Pan Asian Rep. (Theatre Four, 424 W. 55th St. 239-6200.)

MacBETH—Shakespeare's power couple is reinterpreted as a pair of lesbian lovers, leaders of a gang who start a turf war. (Pulse Ensemble Theatre, 432 W. 42nd St. 695-1596. Closes Aug. 29.)

Measure for Measure—The third summer offering of Shakespeare in the Park(ing Lot), from Expanded Arts. (Municipal Parking Lot at Broome and Ludlow Sts. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 253-1813.)

Mother Courage and Her Children (Nanay Isog and Her Children)—The Ma-Yi Theatre Ensemble's version of Brecht's play, in a new adaptation by Rodolfo Vera, stars Ching Valdes-Aran. (Connelly Theatre, 220 E. 4th St. 581-8896. Closes Aug. 29.)

Naked Will—Oscar Wilde travels through time to investigate the origins of Shakespeare's sonnets, in a new play by Blair Fell. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288. Closes Aug. 28.)

Peter Pan—The former Olympic gymnast Cathy Rigby stars in a limited engagement of the 1954 musical. (Gershwin, 51st St. west of Broadway. 307-4100. Closes Aug. 29.)

Things You Shouldn't Say Past Midnight—Peter Ackerman's screwball bedroom comedy consists mainly of a sublimely ridiculous conference call involving three pairs of lovers. The questions about sex and the proper balance between intellectual and physical attraction have no answers, but Ackerman has some interesting suggestions, and, to his credit, comedy outweighs the theorizing. John Rando, the director, has a good eye, and the show comes off beautifully. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 580-1313.)

Thwak—Comic acrobatics (both physical and vocal) from the Australian performers David Collins and Shane Dundas, a.k.a. the Umbilical Brothers. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 307-4100.)

Voices in the Dark—In a new play by John Pielmeier ("Agnes of God"), a radio-talk-show host (Judith Ivey) is threatened by an enigmatic caller. Christopher Ashley is the director. (Longacre, 220 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

The Weir—Conor McPherson's play takes place in the musty chill of a backwater Irish pub, where a handful of habitués chew the cud of their solitude, spinning ghostly yarns. It has a bittersweet charm, but for all the well-crafted talk and the well-observed bonhomie, it is finally a shaggy-bog story. (4/12/99) (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

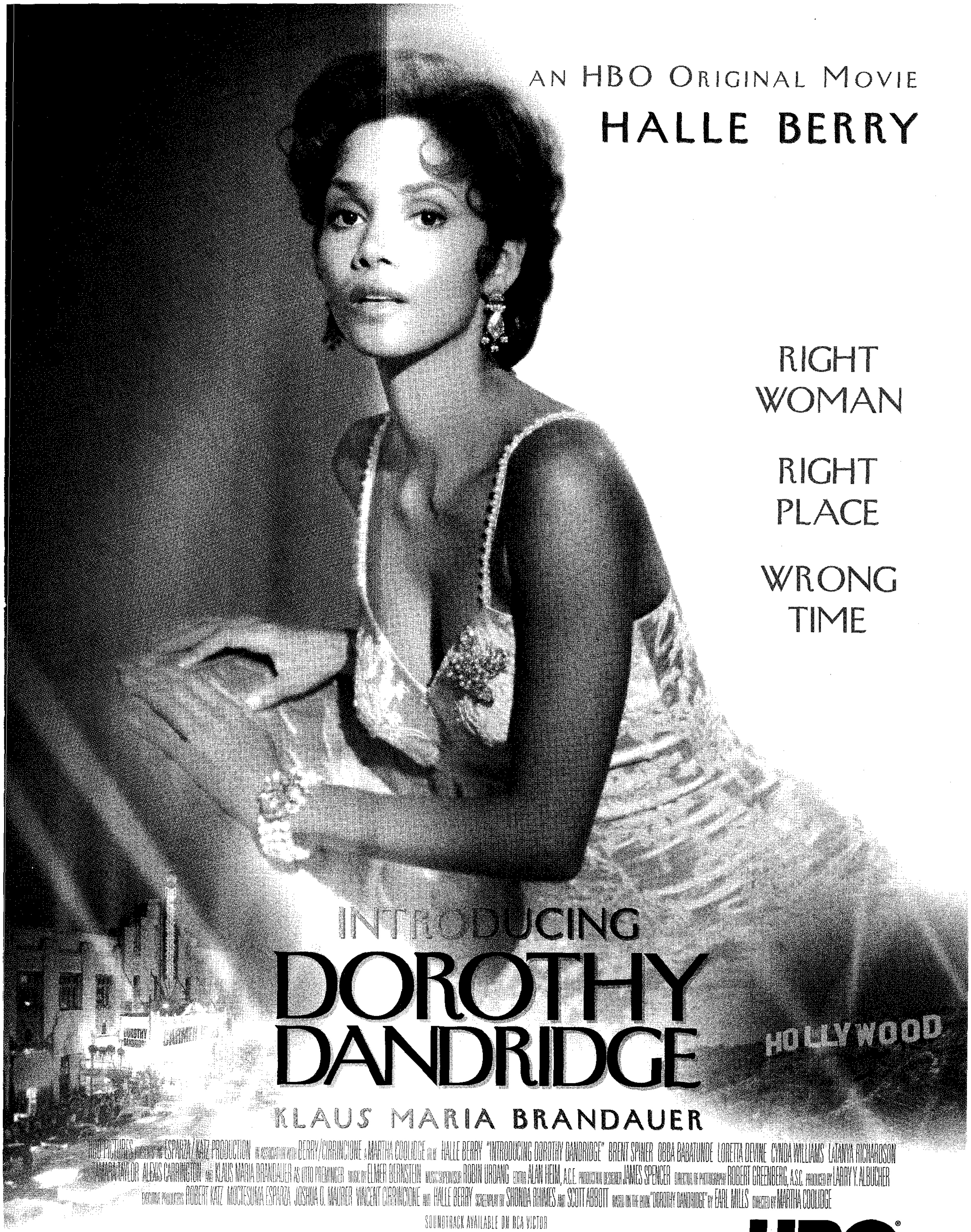
LONG RUNS

ANNIE GET YOUR GUN: Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100. . . . **BEAUTY AND THE BEAST:** Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4100. . . . **BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES:** Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370. . . . **CABARET:** Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 239-6200. . . . **CATS:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200. . . . **CHICAGO:** Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **DEATH OF A SALESMAN:** Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 239-6200. . . . **DE LA GUARDA:** Daryl Roth, 20 Union Sq. E., at 15th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838. . . . **FOOTLOOSE:** Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 307-4100. . . . **FORBIDDEN BROADWAY:** Stardust, Broadway at 51st St. 239-6200. . . . **FOSSE:** Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **HEDWIG AND THE ANGRY INCH:** Jane Street Theatre, Hotel Riverview Ballroom, 113 Jane St. 239-6200. . . . **I LOVE YOU, YOU'RE PERFECT, NOW CHANGE:** Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200. . . . **JEKYLL & HYDE:** Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **LATE-NITE CATECHISM:** St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE LION KING:** New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 307-4100. . . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **MISS SAIGON:** Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200. . . . **OVER THE RIVER AND THROUGH THE WOODS:** John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200. . . . **PERFECT CRIME:** Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401. . . . **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **RAGTIME:** Ford Center for the Performing Arts, 213 W. 42nd St. 307-4100. . . . **RENT:** Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 921-8000. . . . **SECRETS EVERY SMART TRAVELER SHOULD KNOW:** Ibis, 327 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **SIDE MAN:** Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **SMOKEY JOE'S CAFÉ:** Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200. . . . **STOMP:** Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at St. Marks Pl. 477-2477. . . . **TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING:** St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 239-6200. . . . **WIT:** Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 307-4100.

OUT OF TOWN

Williamstown Theatre Festival—Main Stage: "The Price," by Arthur Miller. Aug. 18-29. . . . Nikos Stage: "The Waverly Gallery," a new play by Kenneth Lonergan ("This Is Our Youth"). Closes Aug. 25. (1000 Main St., Williamstown, Mass. 413-597-3399.)

Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival—"Titus Andronicus": When he discovers that his daughter Lavinia has been raped and her hands and tongue have been cut off, the Roman emperor Titus (played with tense brio by Stephen Paul Johnson) sheds his stoicism for a father's wailing. Until then, however, he and the rest of the men in the cast are upstaged by the women. Nance Williamson is divinely devilish as the machinating siren Tamora, and Susan Riley Stevens, as Lavinia, is an engagingly physical actress. This less frequently staged tragedy offers a more than generous helping of bloodshed, and it's a welcome thrill that none of it is at all subtle. Runs in repertory (through Aug. 21) with "Twelfth Night" (through Aug. 22). (Boscobel Restoration, Garrison, N.Y. For ticket information and directions, call 914-265-9575.)



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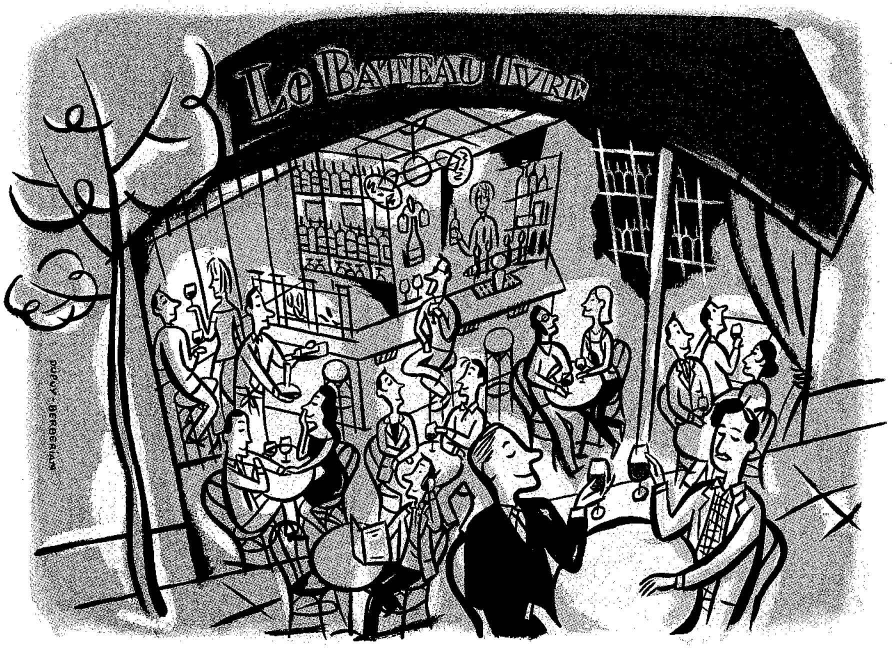
DANCE

White Oak Dance Project—A fortnight of dance by the company founded in 1988 by Mikhail Baryshnikov and Mark Morris includes works by Morris, Karole Armitage, Tamasaburo Bando, Lucy Guerin, Amy O'Brien, and Neil Greenberg. For all its cast changes, the White Oak group has invariably taken the stage with an all-star lineup of dancers handpicked from a variety of troupes. The current cast includes Baryshnikov, of course, complemented this time by five powerful women: Raquel Aedo, Emily Coates, Emmanuèle Phuon, Ruthlyn Salamons, and Susan Shields. (New Victory, 209 W. 42nd St. 239-6200. Aug. 17-21 at 8 and Aug. 22 at 7:30.)



Wine appreciation at Le Bateau Ivre.

Eliot Feld's Ballet Tech—Aug. 18-19 and Aug. 21 at 8: "Consort," "Medium: Rare," "Mending," and "The Jig Is Up." . . . ¶ Aug. 16-17 and Aug. 20: "Play Bach," "Kore," "Danzon Cubano," and "Paper Tiger." (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800.)

Lincoln Center Out-of-Doors—The free plein-air concert series includes many dance events. Aug. 18 at 6: Sara Pearson/Patrik Widrig and Company in "Ordinary Festivals." (Robertson Fountain Plaza.) . . . ¶ Aug. 19-20 at 8: Philadanco in the première of "Ode to Ellington," by Ronald K. Brown. (Damrosch Park.) . . . ¶ Aug. 24 at 5:45: Risa Jaroslow and Dancers appear in "Pool Party Paradise II," with each of the eleven dancers in her own wading pool. (Milstein Plaza.) . . . ¶ Aug. 25 at 10:30 A.M. and 6: The Everett Dance Theatre in "Marriage of Art and Science." (Robertson Fountain Plaza.) . . . ¶ Aug. 25-26 at 8: The New York Baroque Dance Company in "A Masque for the Four Seasons, a Venetian Pageant of Puppets and Dance." (South Plaza.) . . . ¶ Aug. 27 at 5:45: La Troupe Makandal in "Haitian Dances for Gédé." (Robertson Fountain Plaza.)

Dance Theatre Workshop—Aug. 19-22 and Aug. 26-29 at 6: Patricia Fox and Tal Yarden in "Corpus Exquisitus," at D.T.W.'s street-level garage. (Through Sept. 5.) . . . ¶ Aug. 24-25, Aug. 28 at 8 and Aug. 29 at 3: David Dorfman and Dan Froot in "Live Sax Acts." (Through Sept. 12.) . . . ¶ Aug. 26-27 at 8: Molly Hickok in "Mary Chestnut's Bone Case" and Paule Turner Duchess in "She's Out of Her Tree." (Through Sept. 5.) . . . ¶ Aug. 31 at 8: Reggie Wilson/Fist and Heel Performance Group in "Qoqoda" (Ndebele for "Knocking"). (Through Sept. 19.) (219 W. 19th St. 924-0077.)

"The Caravan Project"—Eiko and Koma, the husband-and-wife choreography team, transplant last season's installation at the Whitney Museum to a U-Haul trailer in Bryant Park (Aug. 19-20) and Tompkins Square Park (Aug. 21-22). (All performances begin at 9. No tickets necessary.)

Pilar Rioja—The marquesa of Spanish dance offers a valuable lesson in the regional variations of the form. (Repertorio Español, Gramercy Arts Theatre, 138 E. 27th St. 889-2850. Aug. 18-20 and Aug. 23 at 7, Aug. 21 at 8, and Aug. 22 at 3 and 7. Through Sept. 26.)

OUT OF TOWN

Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival—The Harlem-based children's dance troupe Batoto Yetu. (Aug. 18-19 at 8, Aug. 20 at 8:30, Aug. 21 at 2 and 8:30, and Aug. 22 at 2.) . . . ¶ The choreographer Yin Mei collaborates with the New Jakarta Ensemble, in "Empty Tradition/City of Peonies." (Aug. 19-20 at 8:15 and Aug. 21-22 at 5.) . . . ¶ Nina Ananiashvili and the Principals of the Bolshoi Ballet. (Aug. 25-26 at 8, Aug. 27 at 8:30, Aug. 28 at 8:30, and Aug. 29 at 2.) . . . ¶ The Seán Curran Company. (Aug. 26-27 at 8:15 and Aug. 28-29 at 5.) (Becket, Mass. 413-243-0745.)

NIGHT LIFE

Insane Clown Posse—Having lost a fair amount of thunder to Limp Bizkit in the battle for supreme pop idiocy, these masked demi-rappers return with another helping of seditious song craft. (Hammerstein Ballroom, Mahattan Center, 311 W. 34th St. 564-4882. Aug. 19 at 7:30.)

Goo Goo Dolls—After making dark nail polish and the acoustic guitar safe for boys at the middle-American mall, the Dolls have become the accepted messengers of coed pop ballads and earnest prom dedication numbers. With the pretty-boy So-Cal pop of Sugar Ray and the grimy secret-agent cool of Fastball. (Jones Beach Theatre. 516-221-1000. Aug. 20 at 7:30.)

Barry Manilow—He wrote the songs that made the whole world cry (and a few of our finest jingles). Now he tries to remind us why we cared. (Jones Beach Theatre. Aug. 21-22 at 8.)

Lincoln Center Out-of-Doors—The last performances of the series. Aug. 22 at 9:15: Now in his mid-seventies, the flat-picking guitar

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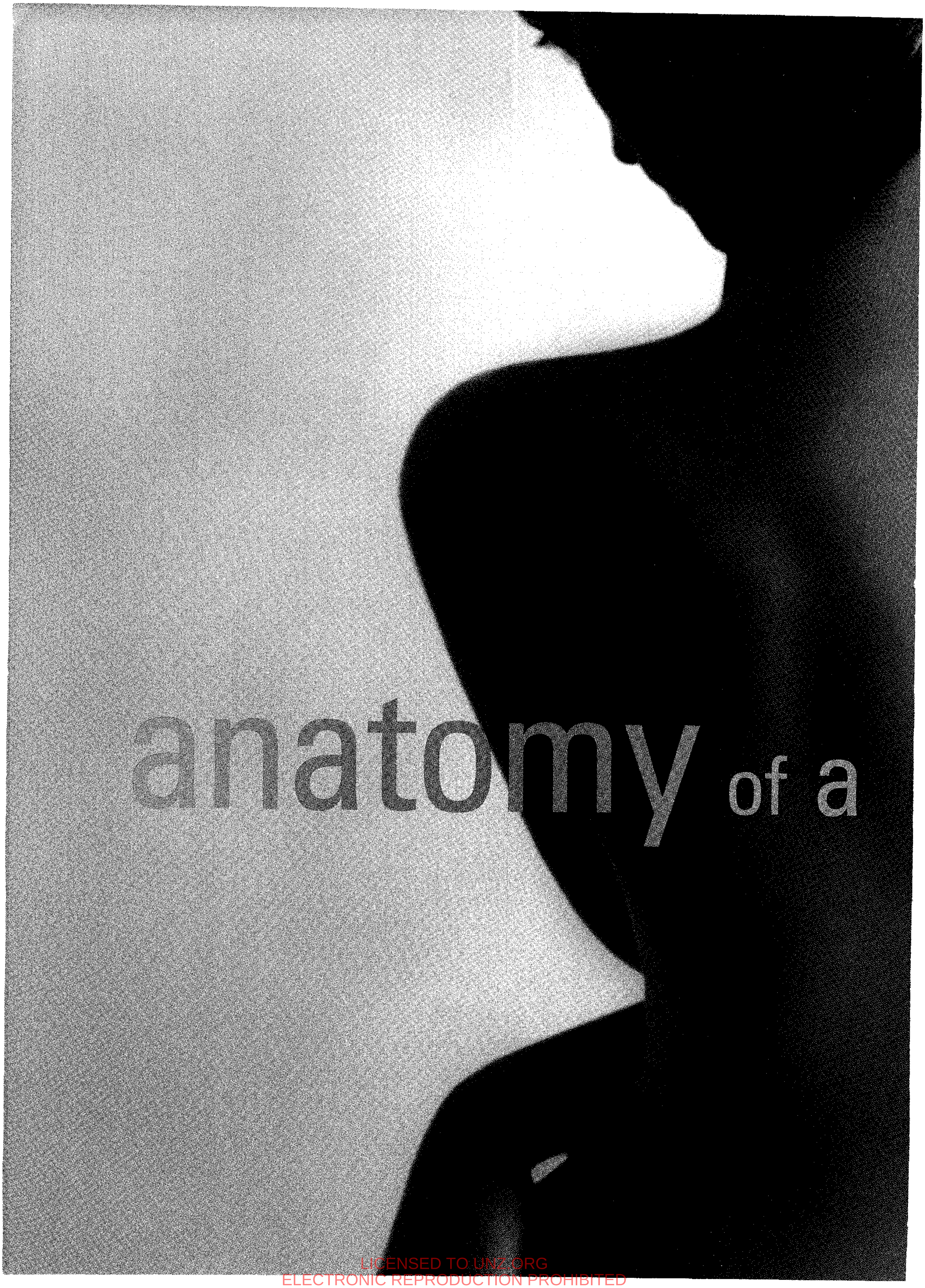

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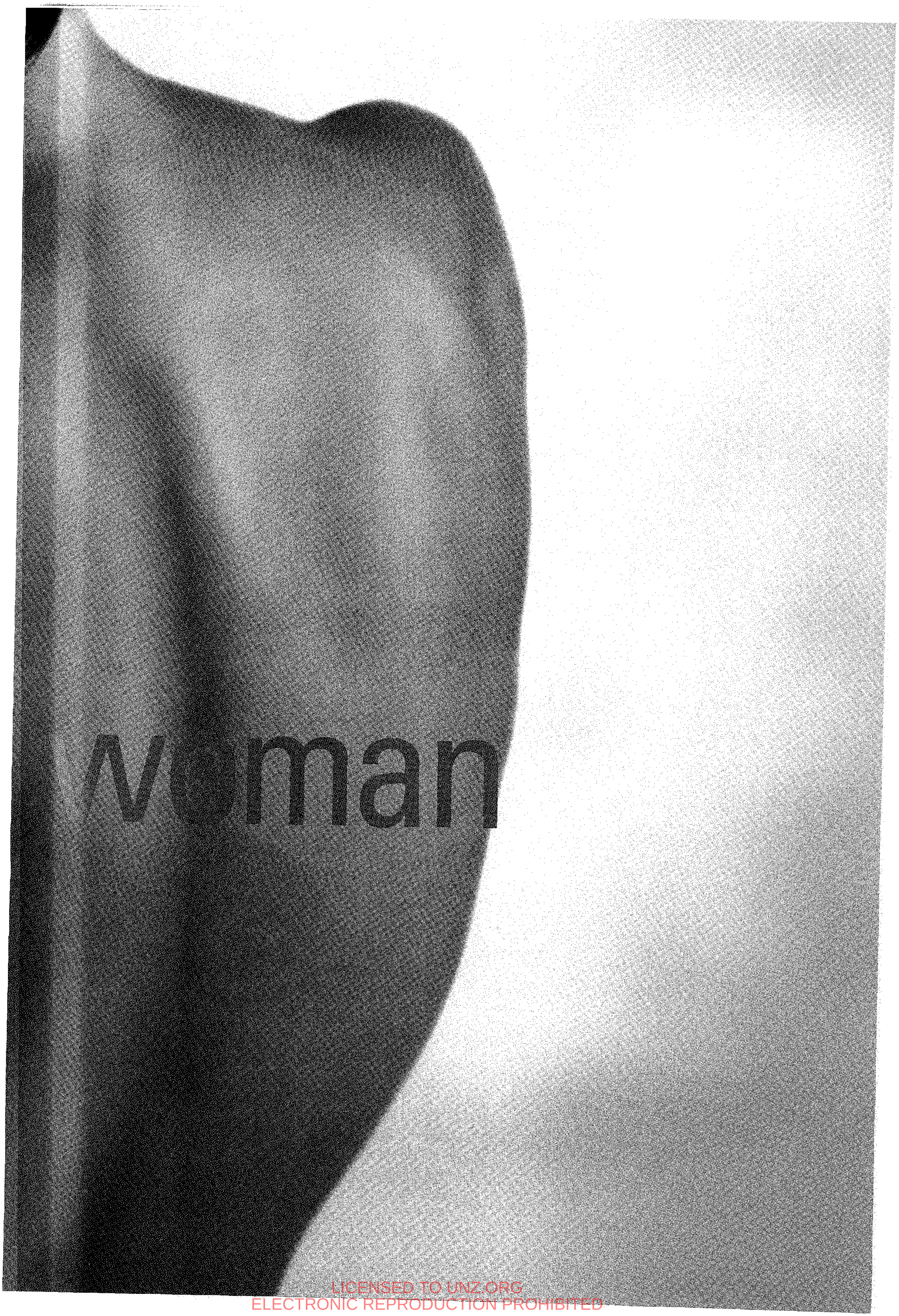
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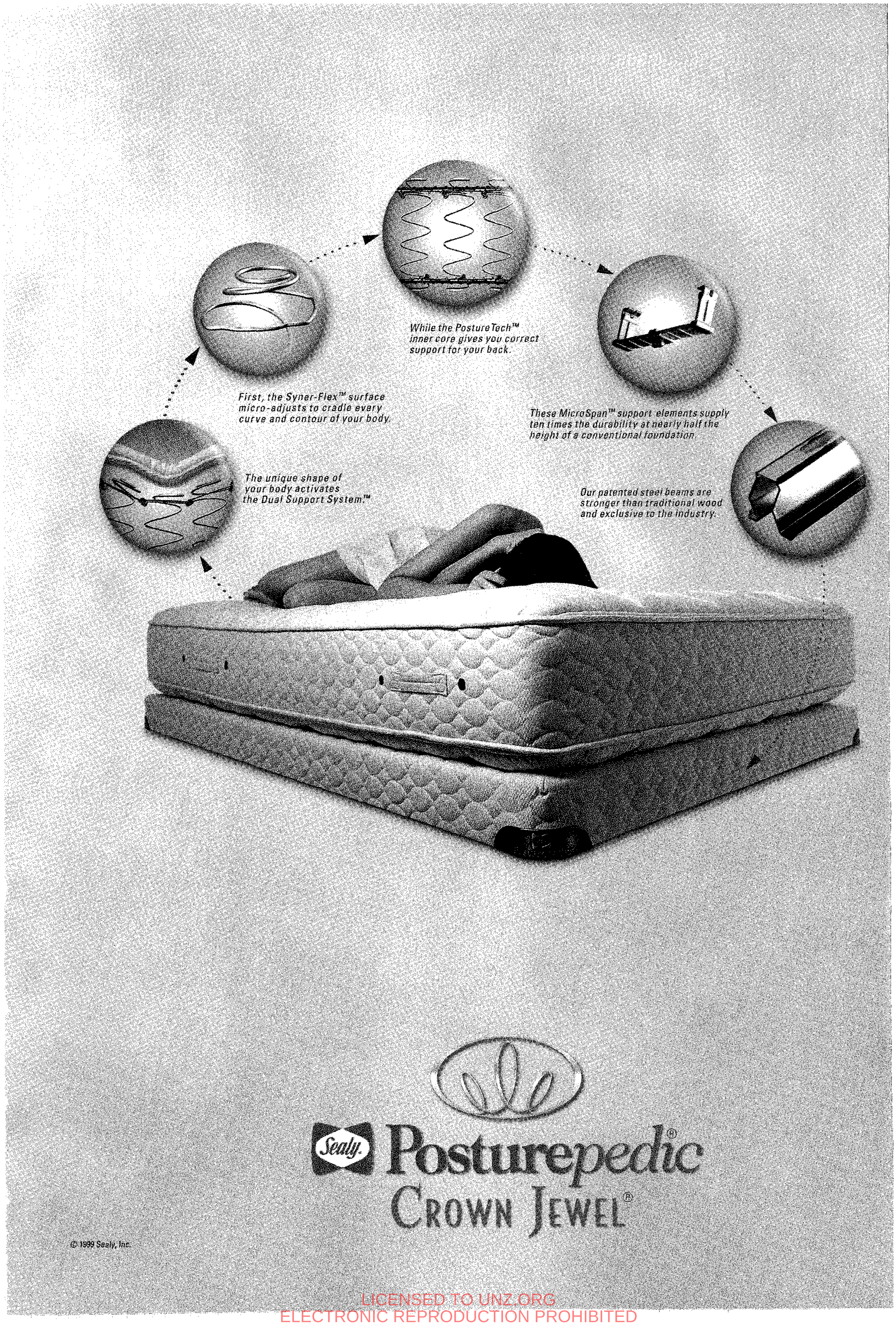

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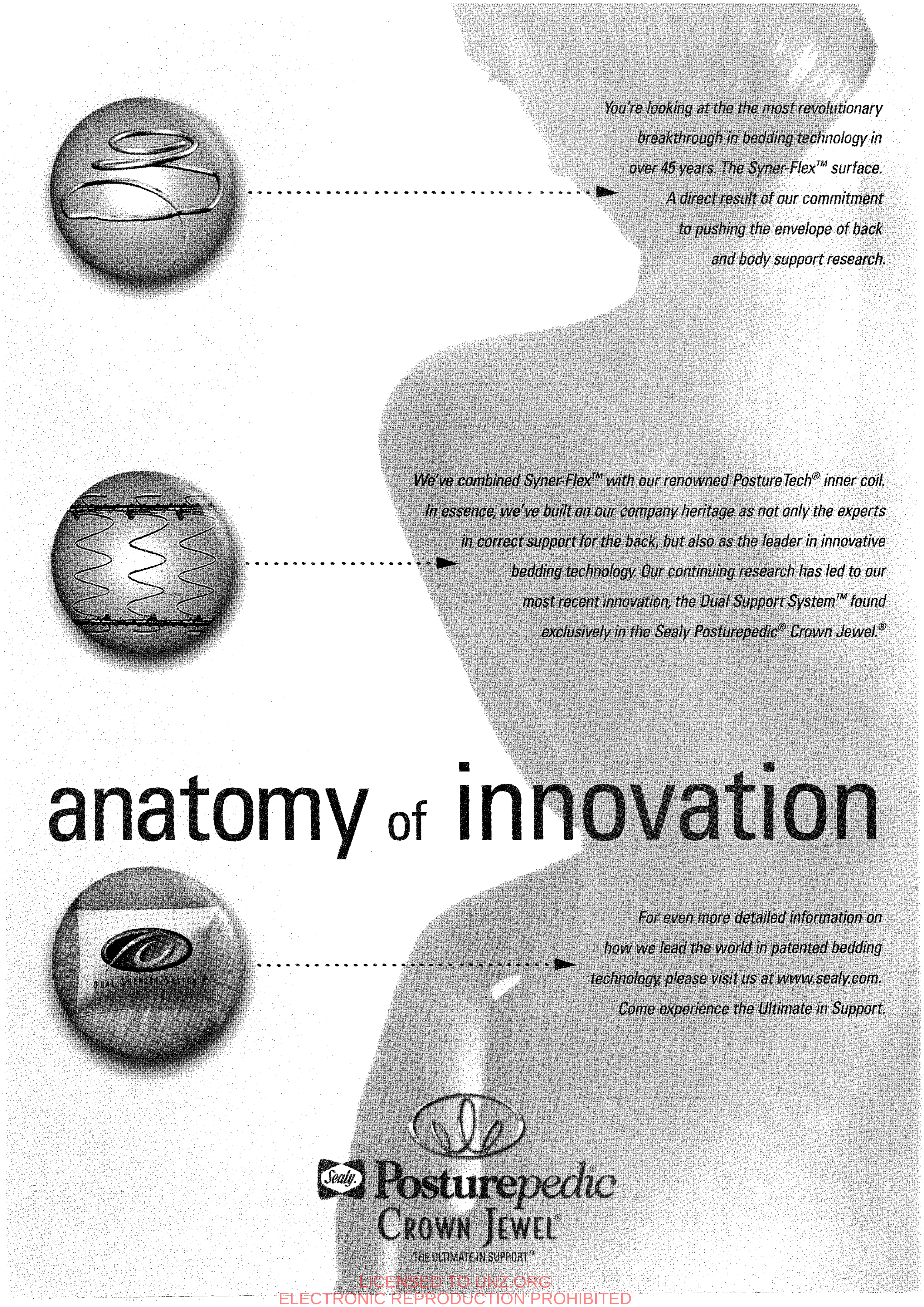

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master Doc Watson is still the same avatar of American roots music that he was when the folklorist Ralph Rinzler discovered him, back in 1960. Now that Bill Monroe is gone, you'd be hard pressed to find someone more deserving of a Smithsonian exhibit. Watson closes a day of country and blues, which starts at 2. (Damrosch Park.) . . . ¶ Aug. 28 at 8: Grupo Mono Blanco, a Mexican outfit specializing in the traditional music of rural Veracruz, tops a day of Latin-American tunes, which starts at 4. (Damrosch Park.) . . . ¶ 29 at 8: The Out-of-Doors series comes to an end with "Brazilfest '99" featuring Ilê-Ayiê, an Afro-Brazilian carnival band from Salvador. (Damrosch Park.) (For more information, call 875-5108.)

Black Sabbath—Happily reunited with original lead singer Ozzy Osborne, Satan's favorite rock band—all the members of which are old enough to have fathered its newest fans—continues to bang heads with maximum prejudice. (Jones Beach Theatre. Aug. 24 at 7:30.)

Jeff Beck / Jonny Lang—The grizzled guitar hero meets the post-pubescent upstart, in an evening of fretboard fireworks. (Jones Beach Theatre. Aug. 25 at 7:30.)

The Allman Brothers Band—The boys from Macon soldier on. With the sophisticated and emotionally daring songs of Lucinda Williams. (Jones Beach Theatre. Aug. 27 at 7:30.)

Charlie Parker Jazz Festival—The one New York jazz festival that never disappoints takes place on a single afternoon. Paying tribute to the bebop giant who lived in the Tompkins Square area during the fifties, this annual gathering regularly pulls together a spectacular cross-generational bill of players. Ageless veterans this year include Milt Jackson and Jackie McLean (both of whom will be backed by the expert Cedar Walton trio) and drummer Roy Haynes and his quartet. The Don Braden quartet, with singers Andy Bey and Etta Jones, will celebrate the life of Betty Carter; Bey will also join pianist Fred Hersch in a tribute to the late pianist Jaki Byard. The highlight of the day, though, might well be the encounter between two Monk afficionados—the veteran soprano saxophonist Steve Lacy and the rapidly evolving pianist Danilo Perez. (Tompkins Square Park. No tickets necessary. Aug. 29 from 2 to 7.)

NRBQ—Often hailed as the world's greatest bar band, it lives up to the hype. There just isn't another outfit with such a mastery of virtually every American popular-music idiom, from rockabilly and blues to jazz and swing. (NYC Blues Cruise, South Street Seaport, Pier 16. 630-8888. Aug. 31 at 7 and 9:30.)

CLUBS

(Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.)

Le Bateau Ivre, 230 E. 51st St. (583-0579)—"One must be a *seer,*" wrote Arthur Rimbaud. And on an August evening the sidewalk tables at this inspired bistro are an ideal spot to follow his advice: "The poet makes himself a seer by an immense, long, deliberate derangement of all the senses." An attractive crowd gathers as the light fades, choosing from a wine list that offers more than a hundred varieties by the glass and another hundred and fifty by the bottle. Divination awaits you like the summer dawn.

Bitter End, 147 Bleecker St. (673-7030)—Aug. 19: **JOHN SEBASTIAN** may be best known as the man who gave us the theme song from "Welcome Back, Kotter," but his finest work dates back to the Age of Aquarius-sanctioned grit of the Lovin' Spoonful. This gig, at a Bleecker Street landmark, promises an authentic helping of time-machine realism.

Bottom Line, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—Aug. 27: **DAVID JOHANSEN AND THE HARRY SMITHS.** The man who also goes by the name Buster Poindexter and who once led the New York Dolls brings in his latest project, a folk-music band that takes its name from the collector who put together the seminal "Anthology of American Folk Music" back in 1952.

Bowery Ballroom, 6 Delancey St. (533-2111)—Aug. 19: **PINK MARTINI.** This sophisticated ensemble from Portland, Oregon, led by Harvard graduate and classically trained pianist Thomas M. Lauderdale, moves gracefully between such genres as Cuban rumbas and French café tunes. Vocalist China Forbes is captivating, and Lauderdale's piano keeps the passionate rhythm section in line. The group's independent release, "Sympathique," is breathtaking. Aug. 20: **LOTION,** the gang whose biggest achievement is having Thomas Pynchon as a friend and advocate (he wrote the liner notes on one of the band's albums), preaches to the converted.

Fez, 380 Lafayette St. (533-7000)—Aug. 20: The exhilarating vocalist **WUNMI,** an alumna of the Soul II Soul collective, brings her personal style of soulful funk to the stage. The **MINGUS BIG BAND** still packs them in every Thursday. Dining.

Irving Plaza, 17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—Aug. 29: "The Reggae Millennium Concert," featuring **BUNNY WAILER, LUCIANO,** and **TOOTS AND THE MAYTALS.**

Joe's Pub, 425 Lafayette St. (539-8770)—Aug. 27: **C. J. CHENIER,** son of the legendary zydeco accordionist Clifton Chenier, upholds the traditions of that Creole dance music.

Knitting Factory, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—Aug. 25: **ROGER ENO** and **LOL HAMMOND.** Brian Eno's cerebral, lesser-known brother mixes it up with the energetic dance-music veteran. Aug. 26-28: **KRISTIN HERSH,** the erstwhile Throwing Muses leader, tries out some new material. Aug. 27-29: Vocalist **RUFUS WAINWRIGHT.**

Mercury Lounge, 217 E. Houston St. (260-4700)—Aug. 24: Former Dream Syndicate front man **STEVE WYNN.**

S.O.B.'s, 204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—Aug. 19: A special mid-month edition of **BASEMENT BHANGRA,** an evening of ecstatic, futuristic dance music which fuses an ancient Punjabi harvest festival with the technological wonders of underground London. The d.j.s Rekkha and Joy spice the infectious *dohl* drumbeat with pinches of classical raga, old-school hip-hop, dub reggae, and the occasional Malcolm X outburst or car crash. The frenetic but friendly dance floor is awhirl with turbans and saris, and Indian film clips are projected as a backdrop. This party makes your average world-music event seem as bland as Esperanto. Dining.

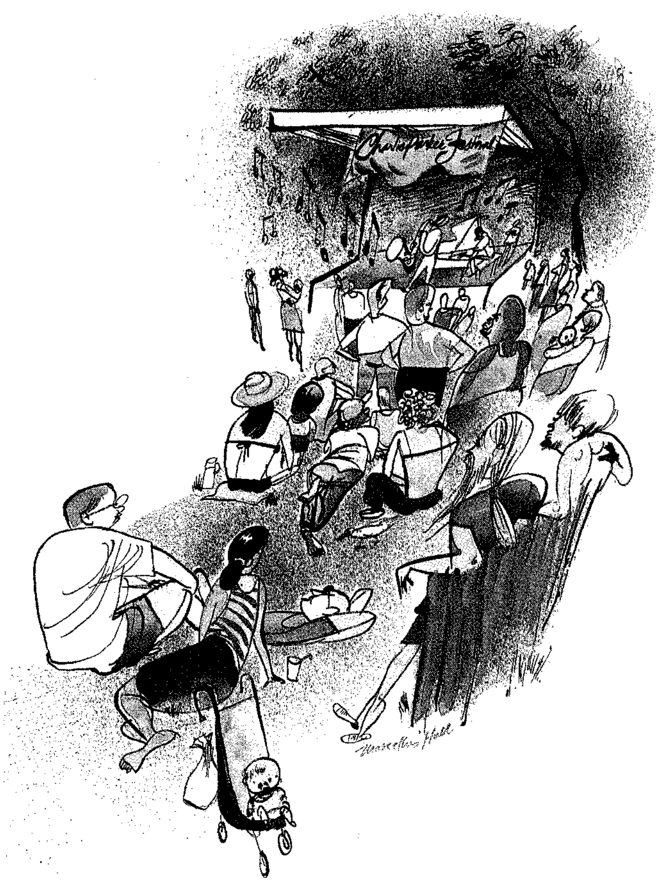
Tonic, 107 Norfolk St. (358-7503)—Wednesdays in August, this Lower East Side salon fills up with the sounds of bluegrass music. Aug. 25: **TONY TRISCHKA,** one of the world's finest banjo players stops by with his band.

Tramps, 51 W. 21st St. (727-7788)—Aug. 17-18: A top-notch bill of pop and psychedelic cult heroes, featuring **THE FLAMING LIPS, SEBADOH,** and **ROBYN HITCHCOCK.** The Flaming Lips, Oklahoma's weirdest exports, have come a long way since forming as a garage band in 1983. After "She Don't Use Jelly" became a minor MTV hit in 1994, the band delved into serious esoterica, releasing an album meant to be played simultaneously on four CDs. With the recent release of the appropriately mind-blowing, sci-fi-oriented album "The Soft Bulletin," the Lips bring their visionary daydreams back to the mainstream. Dorm-room faves Sebadoh are back on the road after a soul-searching hiatus, providing a compelling showcase for Lou Barlow's gossamer balladry and Jason Loewenstein's aggro pop. And the dashing Hitchcock, a former Soft Boy, the godfather of eighties neo-psychedelia, and the subject of a Jonathan Demme film, continues his surreal, Syd Barrett-inspired journey. With the hair-raising theremin-based sounds of **IQU.**

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

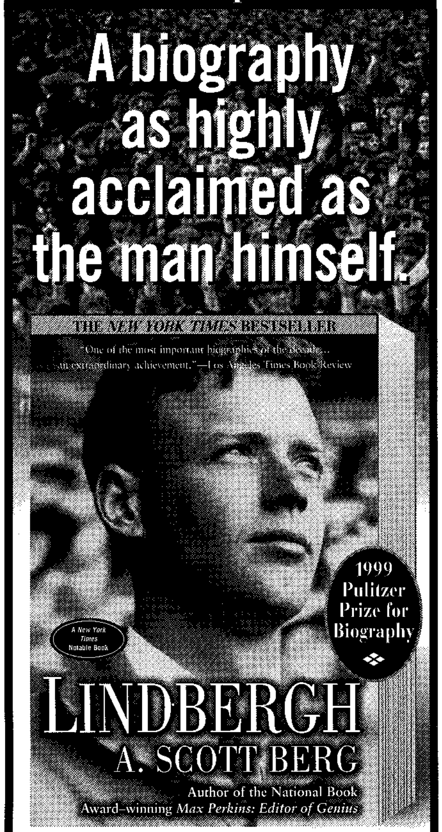
Birdland, 315 W. 44th St. (581-3080)—Through Aug. 22: **TITO PUENTE** and his orchestra. Aug. 26-28: Caravan, a group that unites conga deity **RAY BARRETTO** with **STEVE TURRE,** the stirring trombonist and conch-shell improviser whose heart is affectionately split between jazz and Latin music. Dining.

Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Through Aug. 22: The **PAQUITO D'RIVERA** quintet and the **JAMES CARTER** quintet. Saxophonist D'Rivera was blowing hot Cuban jazz long before it became the world-music flavor *de la semana.* / Showboaters abound in the newest generation of jazz stars, and Carter may be their Evel Knievel. Each Carter chorus becomes a test of will between man and machine—in Carter's case, the saxophone family (he plays tenor, alto, baritone, and soprano saxes as well as flute). It's all very athletic, awesome, and thoroughly exhausting. Carter's virtuosity and historical knowledge practically ensure his eventual maturity; for now, though, his playing conveys too much schoolyard chest thumping to be fully satisfying. Aug. 24-29: **BADEN POWELL** and the **LEO GANDELMAN** sextet.



The Charlie Parker Jazz Festival, in Tompkins Square Park.

MARCELLUS HALL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Other acclaimed A. Scott Berg biographies, *Max Perkins* and *Goldwyn*, are available in paperback from Riverhead

The legendary Brazilian guitarist Powell, making a rare, solo apperance, represents an authentic slice of bossa-nova history. / Saxophonist Gandelman gleefully incorporates the antic notions of free jazz into the tropical mix. Dining.

Iridium, 44 W. 63rd St. (582-2121)—Through Aug. 22: The **JAMES MOODY** quartet. Instrumental virtuosos aren't always a serious lot; on saxophone and flute, Moody spins out warped one-liners and surrealist anecdotes as easily as he does serpentine bebop lines. A fleet alto saxophonist and pensive soprano player, Moody has done his most significant work on the tenor sax. On that horn, you can hear all that he's absorbed, from his days as a featured soloist in Dizzy Gillespie's late-forties big band to Moody's own funky ensembles of the fifties to his strong stint with Dizzy's quintet of the sixties. Since then, he has yet to stop investigating the improvisational byways of modern jazz. Humor, for Moody, is just a tool to keep his audience's awe at bay. Aug. 24-29: The prodigious pianist **MONTY ALEXANDER** swings by with his trio. Mondays belong to electric-guitar innovator **LES PAUL.**

Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St. (576-2232)—Aug. 18-22: The **FRANK MORGAN** quartet. Now that his brushes with the law are no longer news, Morgan's gorgeous alto-sax tone and classic manner can take center stage. He combines the rhythmic ethos of Charlie Parker with the languid sonority of Johnny Hodges and produces solos that honor both the bop he grew up with and the swing he obviously reveres. He doesn't get to town that often, so drop by and welcome him back. Aug. 25-29: Trumpeter and composer Kenny Dorham (1924-72) may not have enjoyed the acclaim that such hard-bop peers as Clifford Brown or Freddie Hubbard did, but among musicians his place in the pantheon is secure. Celebrating what would have been Dorham's seventy-fifth birthday is a solid repertory unit led by the invaluable trumpeter, arranger, and Dorham champion **DON SICKLER,** with pianist **RONNIE MATTHEWS,** bassist **RON CARTER,** and drummer **KENNY WASHINGTON.** Dining.

Joe's Pub, 425 Lafayette St. (539-8770)—Aug. 22 and Aug. 29: Thanks to his custom-built eight-string guitar and a few choice effects, **CHARLIE HUNTER** single-handedly creates sounds last heard in the mid-sixties at, say, a Big John Patton organ-trio club date.

Knitting Factory, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—Aug. 19-20: **DAVE LIEBMAN,** a giant on the soprano saxophone, is one of the few players to successfully integrate Coltrane's model and then devise a path of his own. His bands can be less tough-minded than their leader, but Liebman always rises to the occasion. Aug. 21: Time hasn't dulled **JAMES (BLOOD) ULMER'S** edge: in pulling gnarled melodies and twisted chords from his guitar while barking and drawling spacey blues, he sounds as nasty as ever. Aug. 23: As a mainstay of the World Saxophone Quartet, saxophonist and flutist **OLIVER LAKE** may be a linchpin of the avant-garde jazz tradition, but he's also got an undeniable Caribbean-music jones. His group Jump Up takes on reggae, and his Steel Band incorporates steel drums and island rhythms into the jazz mix. A strong bass-and-drum team—**REGGIE WASHINGTON** and **PHEEROAN AKLAFF**—keep things hopping. Aug. 27-29: The **MATT WILSON** quartet. As wacky as he is smart, Wilson brings some needed fun to the new-jazz scene. The charming leader may tell jokes and shaggy-dog stories between tunes, and his saxophonists are apt to go a little nuts onstage, but it's all carefully balanced by sterling musicianship. Aug. 30: Saxophonist **OLIVER LAKE** (see Aug. 23) fires up his organ trio.

Sweet Basil, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—Through Aug. 22: The **KENNY GARRETT** quartet. Garrett's recent recordings just don't do him justice. A dynamo of an alto saxophonist, he obviously needs the electricity of an audience to keep him charged. Once he's in gear, his instincts as a pure modal-bop player take hold, leaving his crowd-pleasing tendencies in the dust. Aug. 24-29: The **BENNY GOLSON** quartet. Tenor saxophonist Golson, with his brawny tone, full-throttle energy, and impeccable credentials (the Jazztet, Blakey's Jazz Messengers), is a genuine hard-bop hero. He's also one of the finest jazz composers, with at least three classics to his name: "I Remember Clifford," "Whisper Not," and "Stablemates." Dining.

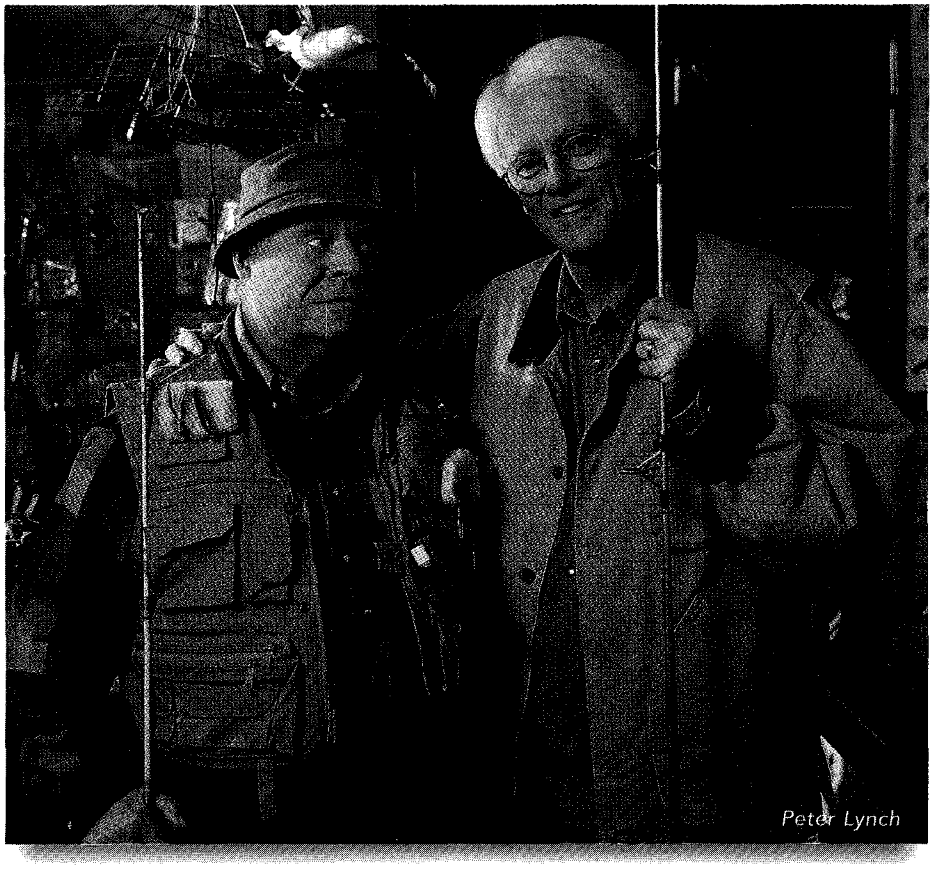
WORLD-MUSIC NOTES

Distant Sounds—A serious listener can't get far into Indian classical music without grappling with the concept of raga. While bearing some similarity to a western scale, a raga encompasses much more: in addition to being a sequence of pitches, it may also be associated with intonation and ornamentation, an emotional state, a season, or the time of day. In theory, a nearly infinite number of ragas exist, but fewer than a hundred surface with any regularity. Nimbus Records, in association with the Rotterdam Conservatory, has provided an elegant sonic encyclopedia of the most popular of them, in **THE RAGA GUIDE: A SURVEY OF 74 HINDUSTANI RAGAS,** a detailed and inviting book-and-four-CD set (NI 5536/9). Squeezing so much variety into five and a quarter hours of listening was no easy task. Nonetheless, the vocal-and-instrumental ensemble assembled for these performances captures the essence of each raga in exquisite four- or five-minute miniatures. The book reproduces thirty-four stunning paintings from a seventeenth-century album that was created as a visual counterpart to the sounds of certain ragas.

Another new collection in bookish format—**FLAMMES DU COEUR: GYPSY QUEENS** (Network 32.843)—offers two CDs and an extended essay elucidating the work of six Gypsy singers who are as diverse as the regions from which they hail. They're all colorful characters. Skopje-born Esma Redžepova has adopted forty-seven orphans, a pool from which she draws musical sidemen for her passionate interpretations. Her numbers are rich in the rhythms of the Levant, as are those of the young Macedonian singer Džansever, whose approach has found its warmest audiences in Turkey and the Middle East. Lusty, bluesy Mitsou, from Budapest, is a modern version of the prototypical Hungarian Gypsy singer, and La Macanita, captured in a studio in Seville, holds up the no-holds-barred flamenco branch of these widely dispersed people. Gentler vocalizing distinguishes the Romanian tradition, at least as practiced by diva Romica Puceanu (who was recently killed in a car crash) and by Gabi Lunča, who sings only at Pentecostal church services. This collection is an ear-opening musical adventure, and there's not a track in the set that doesn't speak to these women's intensely spiritual, but often unhappy, lives.

Village Vanguard, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Through Aug. 22: The **SHERMAN IRBY** quartet. An alto saxophonist whose rhythmic independence and friendly tone set him apart from the crowd, Irby has made his presence known in ensembles ranging from Roy Hargrove's sextet and the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra to his own lean, quick-witted quartet. Aug. 24-29: The fleet-fingered young pianist **ERIC REED** tips his hat to our fair city, both on his new release, "Manhattan Melodies," and with his beefed-up ensemble, the New York Seven. The **VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA** holds sway on Mondays.

Zinc Bar, 90 W. Houston St. (477-8337)—Aug. 19: The exceptional Cuban guitarist **JUAN-CARLOS FORMELL.** Saturdays and Sundays feature Brazilian jazz.



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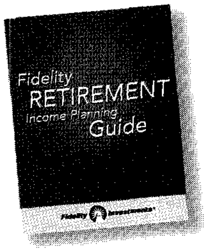

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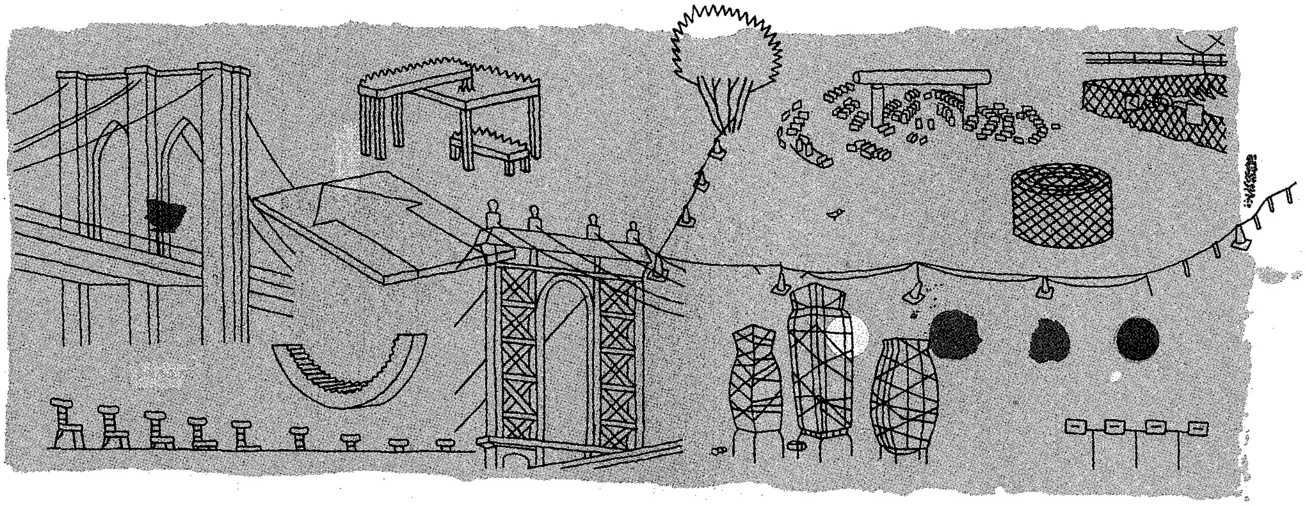
ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—Sharing the Roof Garden with Rodin's "Three Shades" this summer is a group of monumental bronzes by the great, gloomy Polish sculptor Magdalena Abakanowicz. Three of the five are new works, created especially for the installation here: a pair of colossal skulls, a flock of beautiful, weighty birds, and a troop of nearly life-size headless figures who stand at attention, as though waiting for some mournful command. Through late fall. . . . ¶ "Klee Cities" gathers a sampling of the artist's architectural caprices, from his radiant early watercolors of Tunisia to the nearly abstract geometric edifices of his later years. One of the most irresistible of these, "Stricken City," is described in the wall text as a medieval town, but it bears a suspicious resemblance to Bruegel's ziggurat-shaped Tower of Babel. In the sky above the tower's highest ramp, a fat black arrow hovers, pointing downward. Who else but Klee (and perhaps Saul Steinberg) could make divine disapproval so graphic, and so satisfying? Through Sept. 5. . . . ¶ "Gustave Moreau: Between Epic and Dream." Through Aug. 22. . . . ¶ "Prayerbook for a Queen: The Hours of Jeanne D'Evreux," approximately three dozen illustrated pages by one of the masters of medieval illumination, Jean Pucelle (active 1320-34), are on view. Through Aug. 29. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)



"Intervistas" turns Empire-Fulton Ferry State Park into a sculpture garden on the banks of the East River.

LAURENT CILLUFFO

Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—In the era of the gas-guzzling S.U.V., "Different Roads: Automobiles for the Next Century" offers an appealingly contrarian view of our automotive future in the form of nine sleek European-size roadsters parked in the Rockefeller Sculpture Garden. At once conscientious and cute, they incorporate ecological features like hybrid fuels, a lighter but stronger "spaceframe" chassis, and simplified manufacturing techniques that keep costs down. In their design, most seem to have been influenced by the resurgent VW Beetle, with its bubble-shaped body and protractor windows. The smallest of these new models, the Daimler-Chrylser Smart Car (developed with Swatch), takes four and a half hours to produce, occupies half a parking space, and has a vaguely familiar, thoracic compactness. It would look great in black, with a pair of mandibles attached to the hood. Through Sept. 21. . . . ¶ "The Un-Private House." Rather than just present his selection of twenty-six recent house designs as the lively grab bag that it is, curator Terence Riley tries to dress it up as a form of cultural trend-spotting. As far as ideas go, this show is pure bluff. A couple of the projects here—most notably Shigeru Ban's hilarious Curtain Wall house—seem to be intended for clients who have nothing to hide from their neighbors, but for the most part the desire for privacy seems to be on the rise. With their lap pools, ten-thousand-volume libraries, home offices, and high-tech multimedia amenities ("Residents can entertain friends who live thousands of miles away"), most of these lavish dwellings seem like scaled-down variants of Superman's Fortress of Solitude. But, if you set ideas aside, the show is a delight: it's thrilling to see so many genuinely adventurous, even kooky, home designs, and the abundance of scale models makes the exhibition unusually accessible to non-architects. Through Oct. 5. . . . ¶ "Fame After Photography." Through Oct. 5. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, and Thursdays, 10:30 to 5:45; Fridays, 10:30 to 8:15.)

Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—"Surrealism: Two Private Eyes." A vast exhibition composed of work from the separate collections of publisher Daniel Filipacchi and the late Nesuhi Ertegun, who, as a partner with his brother Ahmet, owned Atlantic Records. The show is rich in iconic Surrealist masterpieces; on the other hand, there is a lot of dreck, both by unknown figures and by famous ones having a bad art day. Through Sept. 12. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 9 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 9 to 8.)

Guggenheim Museum SoHo, 575 Broadway, at Prince St. (423-3500)—"Andy Warhol: The Last Supper," a series of works created for an exhibition in a Milan bank not far from Santa Maria delle Grazie, the home of Leonardo's original. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6, and Saturday evenings until 8.)

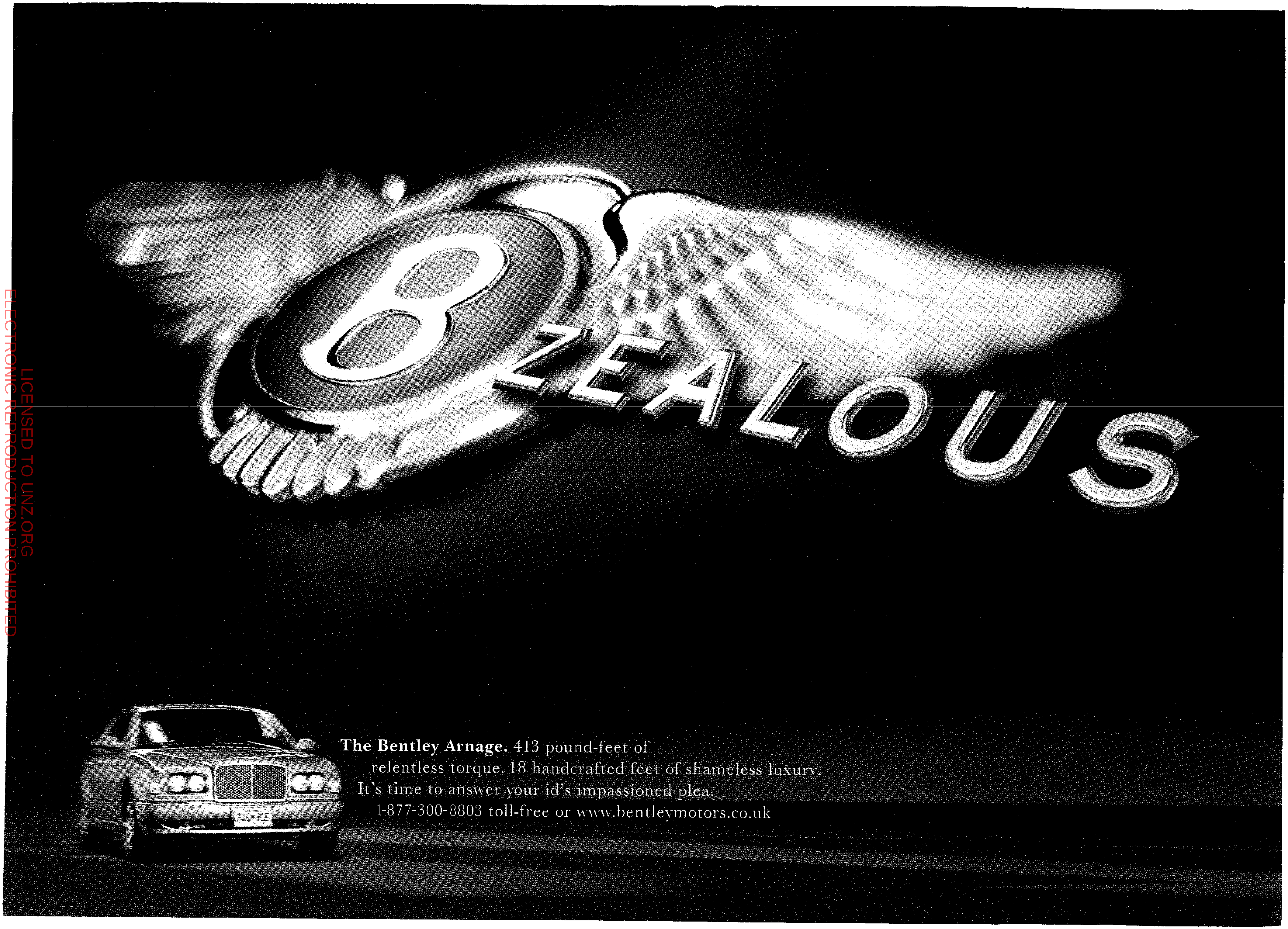
Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—"The American Century: Art & Culture 1900-2000 (Part I: 1900-50)"—a grand, bland survey, full of familiar milestones but remarkably short on fresh connections or surprises—closes Aug. 22; Part II opens Sept. 26. (Open Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8.)

American Museum of Natural History, Central Park W. at 79th St. (769-5100)—At the center of the new Gottesman Hall of Planet Earth is an eight-foot hemispherical model of our mother ship, rigged with an internal projection system that displays her clouds, oceans, and continents, all in motion. It's the kind of high-tech toy you can imagine Bill Gates installing as a chandelier. Ranged around it are a hundred and sixty-eight chunks of the planet itself. Along with relatively familiar specimens of marble, coral, and sandstone, there are glistening buds of black pillow lava, an ice core, a chimney of pure sulfur, and a ventifact—a rock carved by windblown sand—from Antarctica (it looks as if Henry Moore might have left it there). . . . ¶ "Epidemic! The World of Infectious Disease." Through Sept. 6. . . . ¶ "The Endurance: Shackleton's Legendary Antarctic Expedition." Through Oct. 11. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

Brooklyn Museum of Art, Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—"Winslow Homer: Illustrating America" displays a hundred and twenty wood engravings, nearly half of Homer's output during the early years of his career, when he worked as a freelance illustrator for publications like *Ballou's Pictorial* and *Harper's Weekly*. Except for a group of pictures depicting camp life in the Union Army, most are genteel courting and sporting scenes: ice-skating parties, croquet games, frolicking swimmers, and bewhiskered gents roughing it in the Adirondacks. It's a pleasure to watch Homer's stiff draftsmanship grow gradually more supple, but the blinkered gaiety of these pictures does occasionally become oppressive. No wonder that, at the end of his life, the artist devoted himself solely to penitential scenes of pounding surf. Through Oct. 10. . . . ¶ "Impressionists in Winter: Effets de Neige." Through Aug. 29. (Open Tuesdays for the Impressionist show only, Wednesdays, and Fridays, 10 to 5; Thursdays, 10 to 8; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

National Academy Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (534-1672)—"All That Is Glorious Around Us" (the title comes from James Fenimore Cooper) presents sixty-five landscapes by Hudson River School painters, on loan from an anonymous collector, not all of them glorious. The strongest examples are by relatively obscure talents, from Samuel Coleman, Jr., and Homer Dodge Martin to Eliza Greatorex, while major figures like Cole and Bierstadt are represented by minor, even negligible works. Padding out these surprises and disappointments is plenty of picturesque boilerplate, especially the kind of rosy sunsets that once provoked such critical paroxysms as "And lo! Nature in her surplice of summer, ready to preach a sermon." After acres of such sermonizing crags and branches, it's a pleasure to come upon a small room of landscapes by current Academy members which includes George Nick's gloriously brash plein-air view of Times Square. Through Sept. 12. (Open Wednesdays through Thursdays, and Saturdays and Sundays, noon to 5, and Fridays, 10 to 6.)

New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St. (869-8089)—"Such Friends," an exhibit that takes its title from a W. B. Yeats couplet ("Think where man's glory most be-



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gins and ends / And say my glory was I had such friends"), draws a rich bibliographical portrait of the Irish poet's impressively complicated social and literary life. On display are manuscripts and typescripts, often covered with Yeats's tireless corrections; inscribed editions of his poems; correspondence; and portraits by the poet's father and brother, both painters. Also included are volumes and letters by Maud Gonne, Lady Gregory, Ezra Pound, J. M. Synge, James Joyce, and others. Just skimming through this wealth of material can be exhilarating. Horseman, stop by! Through Sept. 11. (Open Mondays, and Thursdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6; Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 11 to 7:30.)

OUT OF TOWN

Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art, 258 Main St., Ridgefield, Conn. (203-438-4519)—For "The Nude in Contemporary Art," curator Harry Philbrick has assembled fig-leafless works by forty-four artists, ranging from consummate draftsmen like Philip Grausman to gimmicky hipsters like the photographer Spencer Tunick (whose performance pieces amount to a latter-day version of streaking). The body is, after all, the one place where tradition and shock value intersect, and Philbrick's promiscuous embrace of craft and attitude alike has allowed him to cull a thoughtful cross-section of the art world. Nineties inevitables (John Currin, Lisa Yuskavage, John Coplans, Lucian Freud) are shown side by side with some striking newcomers. Among these, a trio of dramatized self-portraits by women—Anne Harris, Hanneline Rogeberg, and Jenny Saville—are particularly memorable. Saville's enlarged view of her own back (it's ten feet tall from ear to rear) has the colossal curving presence of a Richard Serra, transformed from Corten steel to mottled, luminous flesh. Through Sept. 12. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, noon to 5; Friday evenings until 8.)

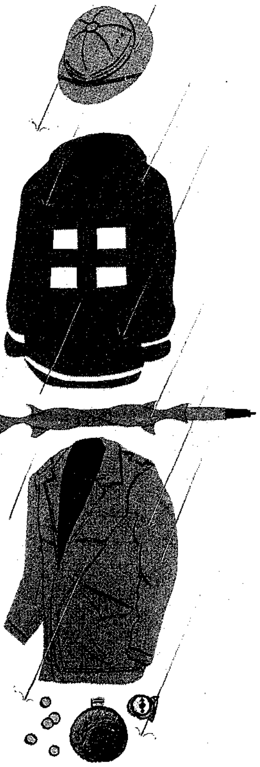
Bard Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, N.Y. (914-758-7598)—"The Meaning of the Nonsense of the Meaning" is, despite its grad-schoolish title, an engaging show of paintings, sculptures, and conceptual high jinks by the Japanese artist and provocateur Takashi Murakami. His meticulous paintings of pop images in the *manga* and *anime* styles are so utterly flat that one assumes they're silk screens. His signature figure, Mr. DOB, has become a registered image with its own fan club, like Pokémon or Hello Kitty. But it's Murakami's sculptures that have gained the most attention recently: "Hiropon" (slang for "heroin" in Japanese) is a female figure with a Baroque tousle of red hair whose preternaturally large breasts squirt jets of milk. Her companion ("My Lonesome Cowboy") is an ithyphallic nude doing rope tricks with a spiralling lasso of semen. Through Sept. 12. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 1 to 5.)

Yale Center for British Art, 1080 Chapel St., New Haven, Conn. (203-432-2800)—A retrospective of the great eighteenth-century British animal painter George Stubbs, one of those figures who straddles two worlds, the Enlightenment and incipient Romanticism. Basing his works on close observation and the study of anatomy rather than previous examples and fantasy, Stubbs clearly belongs to the same world of empiricism as his contemporaries Hume and the French Encyclopedists. At the same time, his work is unimaginable without the riches of the expanding British colonies: he painted the first kangaroo life study. In the same vein, there is Stubbs's tender yet precise painting, "A Zebra." Ultimately, though, the artist must be regarded as a precursor of Romanticism as well, as his famous paintings of lions attacking horses attest. In these works, Stubbs demonstrates effects of terror and sublimity that one encounters in the full flower of Delacroix. Through Sept. 5. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 5, and Sundays, noon to 5.)

ON AND OFF THE AVENUE

Roughing It

There was a time when soggy wool and slippery nylon ruled the slopes and the seas; today, Space Age materials with names ending in "max" and "tek" promise protection from the elements. A remarkable range of fabrics has been infused, impregnated, saturated, and otherwise transformed by high-tech substances that insure invulnerability, but there is often a downside: a decidedly lumpy silhouette.



Still, for outdoorsy types who want to look good while being strenuous, attractive solutions exist if you know where to look. No one would accuse the offerings at **Baretta** (718 Madison Ave.; 319-3235) of dowdiness, even though the concern has been in business for four hundred and seventy-three years. A sportif hunting coat with elbow and shoulder patches and a temperature-adjusting "cool-max" lining fairly glows—ten per cent of it is made of steel, the better to provide protection from thorns and water ($425). The garment brings to mind Gerald Murphy's choice of an outfit for running with the bulls in Pamplona in 1925—a pearl-gray gabardine suit that Hemingway assured him was a hit with the locals: "They say you're called the man in the silver suit."

Papa's literary reputation is taking a beating at present, but his sartorial legacy is secure. At **Hunting World** (16 E. 53rd St.; 755-3400), a lightweight cotton safari jacket is named the Hemingway and features sleeve tabs, epaulets, bullet compartments, and plenty of pleated pockets ($188). The store also carries those famous elephant-hair bracelets so popular with socialites thirty years ago, but now they're interpreted in sterling silver; Hunting World got out of the elephant-hair business years ago. **Upland Trading** may look like it belongs on Jermyn Street, but in fact it's in the East Village (236 E. 13th St.; 673-4994), just down the block from Emma Goldman's old house. In an extremely refined atmosphere, the shop presents Teddy Roosevelt-worthy pith helmets made of khaki canvas, complete with leather chin straps, from the London firm of James Lock ($100); French boating loafers made of white rubber trimmed with navy and just a sliver of scarlet ($95); and the only polar fleece we've ever seen that doesn't make the wearer look like a cheap stuffed animal. It's an oversize pullover from the English firm of John Partridge, and the fiber is so thick that the company calls it polar pelt. A deep-blue example has a chic yellow canvas zippered breast pocket; a Santa Claus-red variation is decorated with canvas squares in a pattern reminiscent of the Swedish flag (around $400).

Downtown, the rough-and-tumble **Tent & Trails** (21 Park Pl.; 227-1760) flaunts the cardboard-box décor that has served it well since the place opened, in 1959 (and there was a camping store there before that, the proprietress says.) Though the shoppers include plenty of junior-high-school students looking for the perfect parka, there are also gadgets that can make all the difference when you're roasting in the Serengeti or drifting around the Pitcairns. A Cool Cat collar disguised as a regular bandanna holds many times its weight in water ($7); a Victorinox Swisschamp de-luxe S.O.S. kit contains not just the celebrated knife but a signalling mirror, a honing stone, and other stuff you've probably forgotten to pack ($140); and there's even a campfire-ready mini espresso-maker, weighing in at a scant 6.2 ounces ($20).

Of course, some people's idea of a great adventure doesn't extend much beyond sipping espresso outside Caffe Dante. For them, a visit to **Be-Speckled Trout** (422 Hudson St.; 255-1421), an old-fashioned candy store in the far West Village that also offers a shifting inventory of world-class piscatorial collectibles, is no doubt preferable to standing hip high in a bracing Adirondacks stream. Among the turn-of-the-century flasks, ancient birch-bark creels, ice-fishing jigging sticks ($475), vest compasses, and angling medals is a set of English pewter buttons ($28) embossed with leaping trout, which could redeem the most prosaic Gore-Tex shirt.

EDEL RODRIGUEZ

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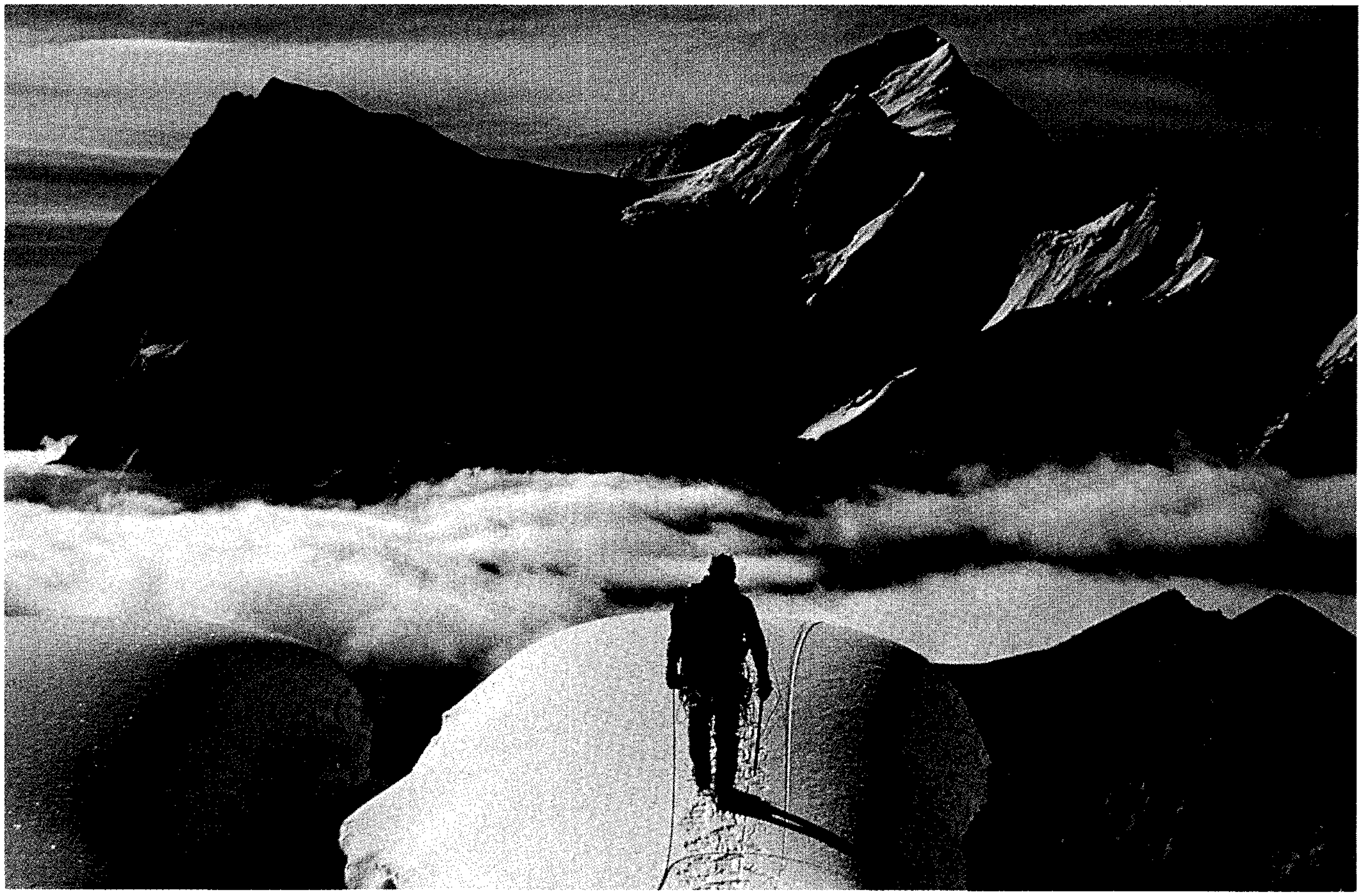

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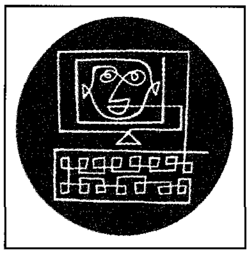
GALLERIES—UPTOWN

(Summer-hours warning: Many galleries are open Mondays through Fridays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6. Others follow the normal Tuesday-to-Saturday schedule. It's best to call ahead.)

Australian Aboriginal Art—A two-venue exhibition of works from Australia's central desert region. The Aboriginal artists have exchanged traditional materials (sand, blood, feathers) for acrylic and canvas, but the urgency of their "dreamings"—which serve as ancestral records, tribal cosmogonies, maps of seasonal water sources, almanacs of food taboos, etc.—remains undiminished. Although the preferred mark is the dot, in a sort of hypnotic pointillist profusion, the form has been likened to Abstract Expressionism. The comparison is apt: the messages in each genre are indecipherable yet palpably, radiantly present. Through Aug. 25. (United Nations public lobby. 963-4475. Through Sept. 2; open daily, 9 to 5. . . . Australian Mission to the United Nations, 150 E. 42nd St. 351-6551. Through Aug. 25; open by appointment.)

ONLY CONNECT



Around Alone (www.aroundalone.com)—"Well, nobody died." Over the ages, countless mothers have spoken those words to alleviate their children's anxiety following some fiasco of their own making. And while it may not be the news a publisher or agent wants when considering yet another true-life adventure tale, other folks may be relieved to hear of one international high-risk adventure that didn't involve someone's demise (though it was touch and go there for a minute). The Around Alone race (formerly known as the BOC Challenge) is a single-handed sailing event covering twenty-seven thousand miles of ocean, in four legs, and this site is devoted to the 1998-99 competition, which ended in May.

An international array of sixteen sailors left the starting line, in Charleston, South Carolina, in September of last year; only eleven completed the gruelling course (the others bowed out), and only nine of those as competitors. The Italian sailor Giovanni Soldini was the winner (finishing the course in twenty-seven days and fourteen hours) and also the hero of the race, having rescued Frenchwoman Isabelle Autissier when her boat capsized in the Southern Ocean, nineteen hundred nautical miles west of Cape Horn. It took Soldini twenty-four hours to reach his colleague, an experience recounted in the sailors' collected dispatches. (Second-place winner and fellow-Frenchman Marc Thiercelin, who did not join in the rescue, comes off as a figure of some controversy.) Then there was Josh Hall, who lost his mast in the same sea and had to motor to the Chatham Islands.

All of these tales were told in real time, as they happened, thanks to the Internet and satellite technology, and reading them after the fact may not float your boat. But thanks to a clever use of Shockwave (in Autissier's drama) and a smart design (courtesy of Quokka Sports), the action seems immediate. Whether you want to see what you missed or whet your appetite for the next Around Alone race (it takes place every four years), there's plenty of vicarious drama for the landlubber, who can then link up to similar coverage (by Quokka Sports), beginning in September, of the America's Cup 2000.

Empire State Art Collection—For those too lazy to drive up to Storm King, a quintet of David Smith steel sculptures (along with nine works by other artists, all from the sixties) has been installed around the reflecting pool in front of the Vivian Beaumont Theatre. The works by Smith show the artist at his most playfully figurative, welding steel-yard scraps into skeletal personnages. Each feels happily precarious, like a collection of plates and brooms balancing on the nose of a seal. The same can hardly be said for the other sculptures on view, which include a pair of clunky bronze and iron Noguchi donuts, a two-tone Ellsworth Kelly wall, and an enormous aluminum George Sugarman Slinky. But the graceful green presence in the center of the reflecting pool is worth a trip on its own. Neglected except by pigeons, the scapular, mountainous forms of Henry Moore's "Reclining Figure" have offset the travertine dullness of the plaza around them day after day for more than thirty years. Public art, in its twentieth-century incarnations, never got any better than this.

"New Visions"—This all-women show includes some promisingly eccentric painters, most notably Maria Tomasula, who pins fruit and flowers to walls and then renders them with the precision of a botanical vivisectionist. Her portrait of a pear skirted by fronds of its own peeled skin has a malicious delicacy worthy of Hannibal Lecter. Equally obsessive are the pastel portraits by Jane Lund and Susan Hauptman, both of whom draw family members and domestic objects (a child's shoes, a porcelain Madonna guarding a bowl of candies) with a velvety, eerie finesse. Through Sept. 3. (Forum, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 355-4545.)

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

Rei Kawakubo—Fashion designers, it is fashionable to say, are the art stars of the nineties, and Kawakubo, who has dressed Merce Cunningham's dancers in stretch-fabric versions of her humpback couture, is perhaps the artsiest. Her Comme des Garçons boutique, next to Matthew Marks and down the block from Dia, is as much an installation as it is a store; its sculpted lacquer displays, in black-and-white, cleverly convert the labyrinthine dizziness of Serra's "Torqued Ellipses" to commercial purposes. And could it be coincidence that the brushed-aluminum cylinder that serves as an entryway was, like Serra's monuments, constructed with the help of shipbuilders? Whatever you think of the peekaboo displays of sweaters and gowns, this timely homage is worth a visit. (520 W. 22nd St. 604-9200.)

Rirkrit Tiravanija—"Untitled, 1999 (tomorrow can shut up and go away)." Tiravanija continues to rifle through postwar avant-garde history, offering in each new show another amusing, charming, annoying, and pointed tweak of the art world, all within the context of art as fun. He has re-created his entire apartment within the gallery, with a working kitchen and bathroom, bed, posters, knickknacks, etc. Purists might complain that Lucas Samaras did much the same thing in the early sixties. The difference: Samaras lived inside his bedroom at the gallery; Tiravanija simply hired one of his students from Columbia to do the living for him. Smart. Through Aug. 31. (Gavin Brown's Enterprise, 436 W. 15th St. 627-5258.)

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

John Armleder and **Sylvie Fleury**—These Swiss artists have assembled two sprawling exhibitions that share a provisional, mockup feel. Armleder's "Mondo Tiki," a big steel-and-wood scaffolding furnished with television sets playing B movies, is a classic instance of the generic nineties installation piece: shapeless and inert, it dares you to ignore it. Smaller works, including a room occupied by six revolving disco balls, are only marginally more engaging. Fleury's half of the show has a clearer point of view; it includes exercise videos, a bisected Camaro painted a glittering mauve, and a gaggle of rocket ships covered in fake fur. But most of these quasi-feminist conceits feel one-note-ish, not to mention dated. "BE AMAZING," one Fleury piece admonishes, to which viewers might be tempted to respond, "You first." Both shows through Aug. 28. (Ace, 275 Hudson St. 255-5599.)

"Signs of the Times"—A seductively motley collection of hand-painted road signs, advertisements, and yard art, some of it dating back to the nineteenth century. With their crudely lettered exhortations to "Drink Howdey" or "Put No Paint on Roses," most of these humble icons conjure a cheery, quizzical nostalgia. A weathered plank marked with a circled X and the legend "Crossroads," however, is delightfully ominous, like a relic conjured out of a Robert Johnson song. Worth a detour. Through Sept. 3. (American Primitive, 594 Broadway. 966-1530.)

GALLERIES—BROOKLYN

"Intervistas"—This little patch of art with a view offers a salt breeze, a boardwalk, and plenty of grass, both real and Astroturf. Several developers would have it otherwise, and a few pieces deal with such threats. One street-corner installation is pasted over with flyers protesting a mall development; a set of natural-light boxes by the water includes a quote from a hotel prospectus promising Manhattan a "Narcissus mirror," in which she can admire herself. Others are less political—a pair of mandalas in brick and wire, a plot of recently turned earth, a split-level lawn—or refreshingly practical: a huge spread of dry dirt and grass seeds is credited to a state parks office and tagged as untitled. On a recent visit, it was occupied by a man sunning in a nasty thong. Through Sept. 6. (Empire-Fulton Ferry State Park, Brooklyn. Open daily, from 8 to 8.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

"Apollo 11: One Giant Leap"—Celebrating the thirtieth anniversary of the mission, with images from liftoff to footfall to splashdown. Through Aug. 20. (Schickler, 560 Broadway. 431-6363.)

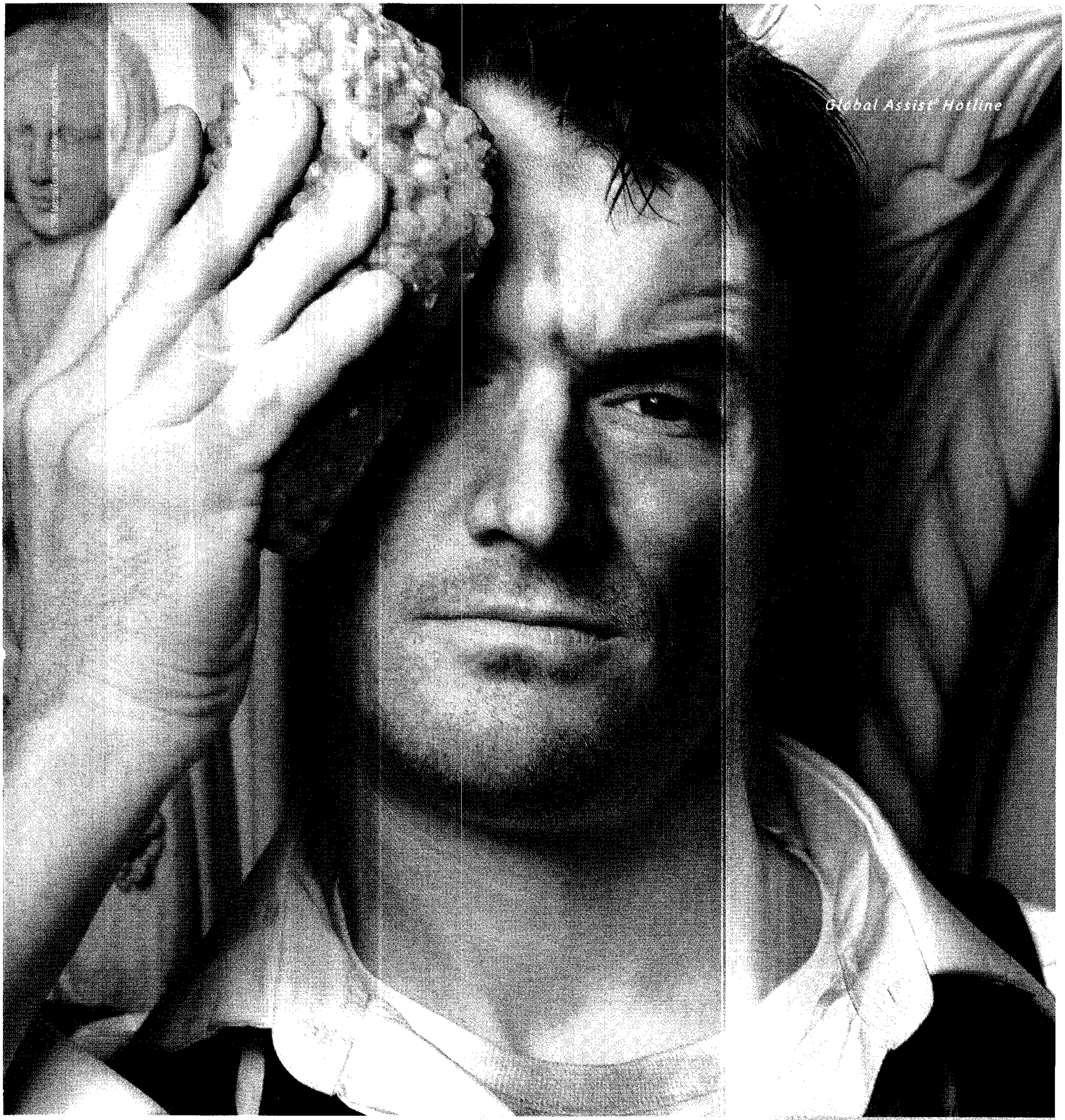
"Summer Reading"—Photographs and photograms of books, including works by Andrew Bush, Tim Maul, Abelardo Morrell, Fawn Potash, Allison Rossiter, and Masao Yamamoto. Through Aug. 27. (Richardson, 560 Broadway. 343-1255.)

"Thirteen"—Photographs by artists from the latest issue of *Blind Spot*, among them Graciela Iturbide, Barbara Ess, Vik Muniz, and Rosalind Solomon. Through Aug. 20. (Mann, 210 Eleventh Ave., at 25th St. 989-7600.)

International Center of Photography—"Sea Change: The Seascape in Contemporary Photography." Through Sept. 26. . . . ¶ "Myths, Dreams, and Realities in Contemporary Argentine Photography." Through Sept. 26. (1130 Fifth Ave., at 94th St. 860-1777. Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10 to 5; Fridays, 10 to 8; Saturdays and Sundays, 10 to 6.)

Short List—**henri cartier-bresson,** Danziger, 851 Madison Ave., at 70th St. 734-5300. Through Aug. 31. . . . **judith joy ross,** Pace Wildenstein MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. 759-7999. Through Aug. 27. . . . **francesca woodman,** Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. 977-7160. Through Aug. 31.

(See the museum listings for photography exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art and the American Museum of Natural History.)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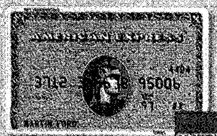
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MOSTLY MOZART—Aug. 18-19 at 6: The Keller String Quartet offers two different programs of Haydn quartets. (Walter Reade Theatre.) . . . ¶ Aug. 18 at 8: Gerard Schwarz leads the Mostly Mozart Festival Orchestra in Mozart's Symphony No. 20 and Piano Concerto in D Major (K. 451, featuring Lilya Zilberstein), in addition to Stravinsky's "Pulcinella" ballet score (with mezzo-soprano Kimberly Barber and tenor Hans Peter Blochwitz). (Avery Fisher Hall.) . . . ¶ Aug. 19 at 8: Members of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, plus several colleagues, perform all six of Bach's "Brandenburg" Concertos—an off-season rendition of the Society's annual Christmas-season Bachfest. (Avery Fisher Hall.) . . . ¶ Aug. 20-21 at 8: Mr. Schwarz and the Festival Orchestra perform works from Mozart's last year: his Two Contradanses (K. 603), Three German Dances (K. 605), Clarinet Concerto (with Richard Stoltzman as soloist), Requiem (in the traditional Süssmyer edition), and, to bring the season to a pensive close, the gemlike motet "Ave Verum Corpus" (K. 618). Soprano Christine Brandes, mezzo-soprano Angelika Kirchschlager, tenor Hans Peter Blochwitz, bass Peter Rose, and the Dessoff Choirs assist in the vocal works. (Avery Fisher Hall.) (For information about Mostly Mozart tickets, call 721-6500.)

BRONX ARTS ENSEMBLE—An all-Vivaldi program includes the "Spring" and "Summer" concertos from "The Four Seasons," featuring violinist Jorge Avila. (Rockwood Drive Circle, Van Cortlandt Park, the Bronx. Aug. 22 at 2. In case of rain, the concert will be held at the Church of the Mediator, Kingsbridge Ave. at W. 231st St. . . . ¶ McGinley Center, Fordham University, the Bronx. Aug. 22 at 4. For information, call 718-601-7399.)

NEW AMSTERDAM SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA—Eckart Preu conducts Stravinsky's Suites No. 1 and No. 2 for Small Orchestra, Beethoven's concert scena "Ah, Perfido" (with soprano Hanli Stapela), and Mozart's Symphony No. 39. (St. Peter's Episcopal Church, 346 W. 20th St. Aug. 31 at 7:30. Tickets at the door.)

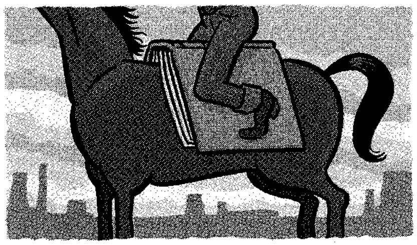
RECITALS

BARGEMUSIC—Aug. 19 at 7:30 and Aug. 22 at 4: Violinist Ida Levin, clarinettist Thomas Hill, cellist Ronald Thomas, and pianist Anton Nel offer a concert comprising Beethoven's Clarinet Trio, Elgar's Violin Sonata, and Mendelssohn's C-Minor Piano Trio. . . . ¶ Aug. 20 at 7:30: Cellist Bion Tsang and pianist Mihae Lee perform sonatas by Debussy, Beethoven (his Cello Sonata No. 4), and Strauss, in addition to Schumann's "Fünf Stücke im Volkston." . . . ¶ Aug. 26 at 7:30 and Aug. 29 at 4: A wide-ranging grab bag of chamber works: Mozart's D-Major Flute Quartet, Villa-Lobos's "Jet Whistle," Duruflé's "Prélude, Recitative, and Variations" (for flute, viola, and piano), and Brahms's A-Major Piano Quartet. . . . ¶ Aug. 27 at 7:30: Pianists Leslie Amper and Randall Hodgkinson offer four-hand arrangements of pieces by Bach, Schubert, Debussy, and Gershwin. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-4061.)

SUMMERGARDEN—The final concerts of the season for this outdoor festival, which has focussed on music by twentieth-century women from all over the world. Aug. 20-21 at 8:30: The Bulgarian pianist Lora Tchekoratova performs solo pieces by Mist Thorkelsdóttir (from Iceland), Karin Rehnqvist (Sweden), Ushio Torikai (Japan), Vanessa Lann (the United States), Adriana Hölszky (Romania), Hanna Kulenty (Poland), and Alexina Louie (Canada). . . . ¶ Aug. 27-28 at 8:30: The MOTA Trio plays piano trios by Betsy Jolas, Judith Weir, Karmello Tsepolenko, Ursula Mamlok, and Judith Lang Zaimont. (Sculpture Garden, Museum of Modern Art, 14 W. 54th St. No tickets necessary.)

BOOK CURRENTS

Don't Fence Me In



CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

"WHAT is the Marlboro Man if not an icon, squinting down square-jawed at the mortals below on Sunset Boulevard?" asks David McCumber in **THE COWBOY WAY** (Bard), an account of his stint as a Montana ranch hand. McCumber, like so many before him, left behind a confined, conventional life—and a divorce—in favor of the seductive iconography of the West. Over the course of eight months on a sprawling cattle ranch, the forty-four-year-old former editor at the San Francisco *Examiner* found that "a cowboy is a stereotype that defies itself." The only heroism he discovered was grounded in the cowpuncher's relentless regime of chores—from delivering calves by C-section to keeping a fleet of pickups oiled and tuned.

Like McCumber, Ellen Meloy, a writer living in southeastern Utah, was determined to discover new truths about the mythology of the West. In **THE LAST CHEATER'S WALTZ** (Holt), Meloy tells how she explored a sizable patch of desert and encountered a stark landscape of atomic test sites, side-blotched lizards, particle accelerators, and the dangerously alluring blooms of the claret-cup cactus. A different kind of desert bloom is examined in **THE REAL LAS VEGAS**, due out in October from Oxford. This collection of investigative essays, edited by David Littlejohn, attempts to "peel off the Strip" in order to uncover the Vegas behind the neon: seniors crowding into colossal bingo halls, teenagers "tweaking" on speed, and brothel workers commuting to their jobs in the outlying town of Pahrump.

Maynard Dixon, another *Examiner* maverick, was the paper's twenty-five-year-old art director when he decided, in 1900, to "go East to see the West." **DESERT DREAMS: THE ART AND LIFE OF MAYNARD DIXON** (Gibbs Smith), by Donald J. Hagerty, is a de-luxe monograph devoted to the painter and illustrator who once despaired, "I'm being paid to lie about the West." Dixon's exasperation pushed him to create startling, light-saturated images: tall skies with scudding clouds, Native American camps, and distant, beckoning mesas.

Books.
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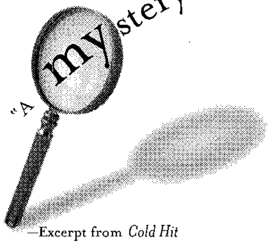

"A mystery novel waited for me next to my bed, but there was nothing like the sight of a real corpse to alienate me from the genre for a couple of weeks."

—Excerpt from *Cold Hit*

COLD HIT

by Linda Fairstein

Linda Fairstein, bestselling author of *Final Jeopardy* and Manhattan's Assistant District Attorney in charge of the Sex Crimes Unit, delivers another gritty, authentic novel of crime and justice. Elegant and beautiful, Denise Caxton was a major player in the New York art scene, but when her silk-clad body is found snagged on rocks in the Hudson River, her bidding days are over. The investigation takes Assistant D.A. Alexandra Cooper into the back rooms of Chelsea's glitzy galleries and auction houses, where murder is an art and scandal is the worst sin of all.
(Scribner)

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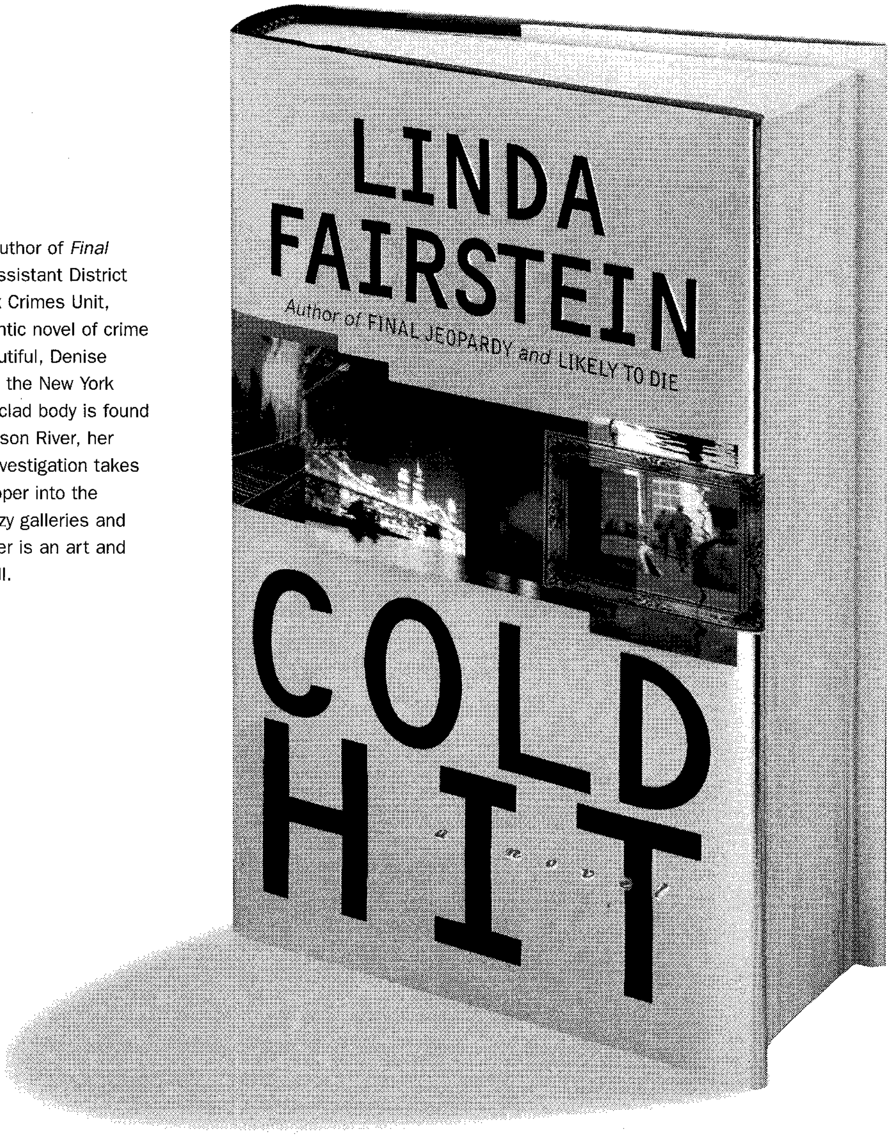

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ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Non Sequitur Festival—A mini-celebration of short pieces created to accompany screenings of independently produced films. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., at Spring St. 647-0202. Aug. 24-25 at 8.)

Locrian Chamber Players—The modern-music group offers solo and chamber pieces composed in the past ten years by Steve Reich, Peter Lieberson, and Miguel del Avila, among others. (Riverside Church, tenth floor; enter at 91 Claremont Ave., at 122nd St. Aug. 26 at 8. No tickets necessary.)

OUT OF TOWN

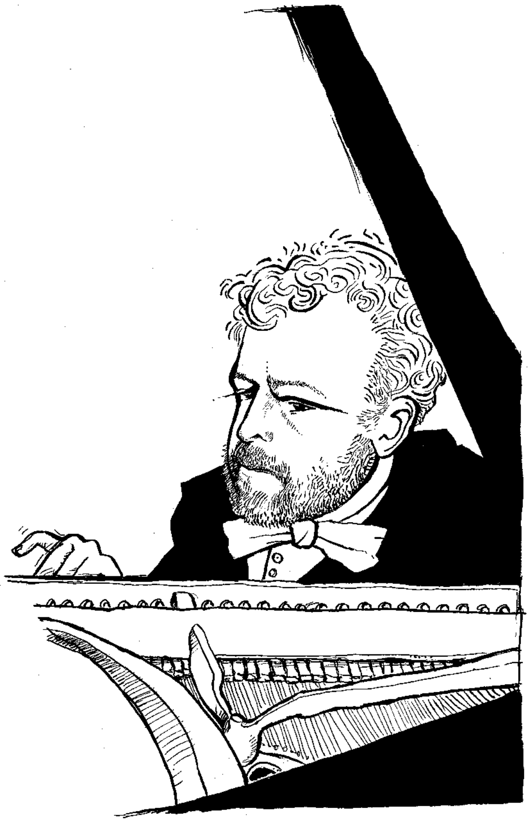
(A selective listing of festival events within a reasonable drive from New York City. Call the presenters for complete schedules.)

Bridgehampton Chamber Music Festival—Final concerts of the season. Aug. 18 at 8: Ravel's "Introduction and Allegro," Poulenc's Trio for Oboe, Bassoon, and Piano, Bruce MacCombie's "Anecdotes" for wind quintet (a première), and Franck's Piano Quintet. . . . ¶ Aug. 19 at 5: Prokofiev's "Peter and the Wolf," transcribed for wind quintet, in a family performance with actor Roy Scheider delivering the narration. . . . ¶ Aug. 21 at 8: A program of twentieth-century pieces, including Copland's Piano Quartet and a new work by David Shohl. . . . ¶ Aug. 22 at 6:30: The première of Kenji Bunch's "Changes of Phase" for wind quintet, as well as Beethoven's Quintet for Piano and Winds and Brahms's Piano Quintet. (Bridgehampton Presbyterian Church, 2429 Montauk Highway, Bridgehampton, N.Y. 516-537-6368.)

Saratoga Performing Arts Center—The Philadelphia Orchestra, conducted by Wolfgang Sawallisch, closes up its summer home for the season. Aug. 18: Strauss's "Don Juan," Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 4 (featuring Leif Ove Andsnes), and Schumann's Symphony No. 2. . . . ¶ Aug. 19: Bach's Toccata and Fugue in D Minor (in Leopold Stokowski's arrangement, a Philadelphia Orchestra signature piece), Mozart's Violin Concerto No. 5 (featuring Judith Ingolfsson), and Beethoven's Symphony No. 2. . . . ¶ Aug. 20: Dvořák's "Carnival Overture," Schumann's Piano Concerto (with Mr. Andsnes), and Brahms's Symphony No. 1. (Saratoga Springs, N.Y. 518-587-3330. Evenings at 8:15.)

Glimmerglass Opera—Final performances of the season. Aug. 19 and Aug. 21 at 8: "Central Park," a triptych of one-act operas: Deborah Drattell's "The Festival of Regrets," with a libretto by Wendy Wasserstein; Michael Torke's "Strawberry Fields," with a libretto by A. R. Gurney; and Robert Beaser's "The Food of Love," with a libretto by Terrence McNally. . . . ¶ Aug. 20 at 8 and Aug. 23 at 2: "Rigoletto.". . .¶ Aug. 21 at 1:30: "The Abduction from the Seraglio," in English. . . . ¶ Aug. 22 at 2: Monteverdi's "Il Ritorno d'Ulisse in Patria." (Cooperstown, N.Y. 607-547-2255.)

Tanglewood—Final classical concerts of the season. Aug. 19 at 8:30 and Aug. 21 at 2:30: A fully staged production of Puccini's "Gianni Schicchi," performed by students at the Tanglewood Music Center. Robert Spano conducts. . . . ¶ Aug. 20 at 8:30: Charles Dutoit conducts the Boston Symphony Orchestra in Roussel's "Le Festin de l'Araignée," Debussy's "Danses Sacrée et Profane" (featuring Ann Hobson Pilot, the orchestra's principal harpist), Chausson's "Poème" and Saint-Saëns's "Introduction and Rondo Capriccioso" (both with violinist Joshua Bell), and Bizet's Symphony in C Major. . . . ¶ Aug. 21 at 8:30: Wolfgang Sawallisch conducts the Philadelphia Orchestra in Dvořák's "Carnival Overture," Schumann's Piano Concerto (with Leif Ove Andsnes), and Brahms's Symphony No. 1. . . . ¶ Aug. 22 at 2:30: Mr. Dutoit and the Boston Symphony Orchestra offer Stravinsky's "Danses Concertantes," Chopin's Piano Concerto No. 2 (with Nelson Freire), and Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 4. . . . ¶ Aug. 27 at 8:30: André Previn leads the Boston Symphony Orchestra in Britten's "Spring Symphony" (with soprano Janice Watson, mezzo-soprano Theodora Hanslowe, tenor Anthony Dean Griffey, the Tanglewood Festival Chorus, and the American Boychoir) and Beethoven's Symphony No. 4. . . . ¶ Aug. 28 at 8:30: Alan Gilbert conducts the Boston Symphony Orchestra in Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 1 (featuring André Watts) and the first two-thirds of Respighi's "Roman Triptych"—"Fountains of Rome" and "Pines of Rome.". . . ¶ Aug. 29 at 2:30: James DePreist conducts the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Tanglewood Festival Chorus, and four soloists in Beethoven's Symphony No. 9. . . . ¶ Aug. 30 at 8:30: The Boston Pops, conducted by John Williams, plays Hollywood scores. (Lenox, Mass. 888-266-1200.)



Pianist Nelson Freire performs at Tanglewood.

HOWARD COALE

Bard Festival—The second and concluding weekend of an exploration of the music of Schoenberg and the cultural milieus in which it was created. Aug. 20 at 10 A.M. and 1:30: Symposia with several Schoenberg scholars. . . . ¶ At 8:30: A semi-staged performance of "Walzer aus Wien," an operetta arranged by Korngold from music by the Johann Strausses, Sr. and Jr. . . . ¶ Aug. 21 at 10 A.M.: A roundtable about Schoenberg's achievements as a painter. . . . ¶ At 2: A recital of lieder by Schoenberg (including his complete "Buch der Hängenden Gärten") and such contemporaries of his as Strauss, Reger, Zemlinsky, and Schreker. . . . ¶ At 8: The Bard Festival Orchestra, with Leon Botstein on the podium, performs Schoenberg's Chamber Symphony No. 1 (in its full orchestral version), his cantata "Die Glückliche Hand," and his symphonic poem "Pelleas und Melisande.". . . ¶ Aug. 22 at 10 A.M.: A panel considers Schoenberg's years in Hollywood. . . . ¶ At 1:30: Schoenberg's String Quartet No. 3, plus chamber works by his pupils Egon Wellesz, Nikos Skalkottas, Roberto Gerhard, and Hanns Eisler. . . . ¶ At 5: Mr. Botstein and the Bard Festival Orchestra offer Mahler's orchestration of Beethoven's F-Minor String Quartet (Op. 95), in addition to Schoenberg's Piano Concerto (featuring Mari Kodama), his orchestral transcriptions of two pieces by Bach, and his Variations for Orchestra. (Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, N.Y. 914-758-3226. . . . NOTE: Pre-concert lectures begin a half hour before each performance.)

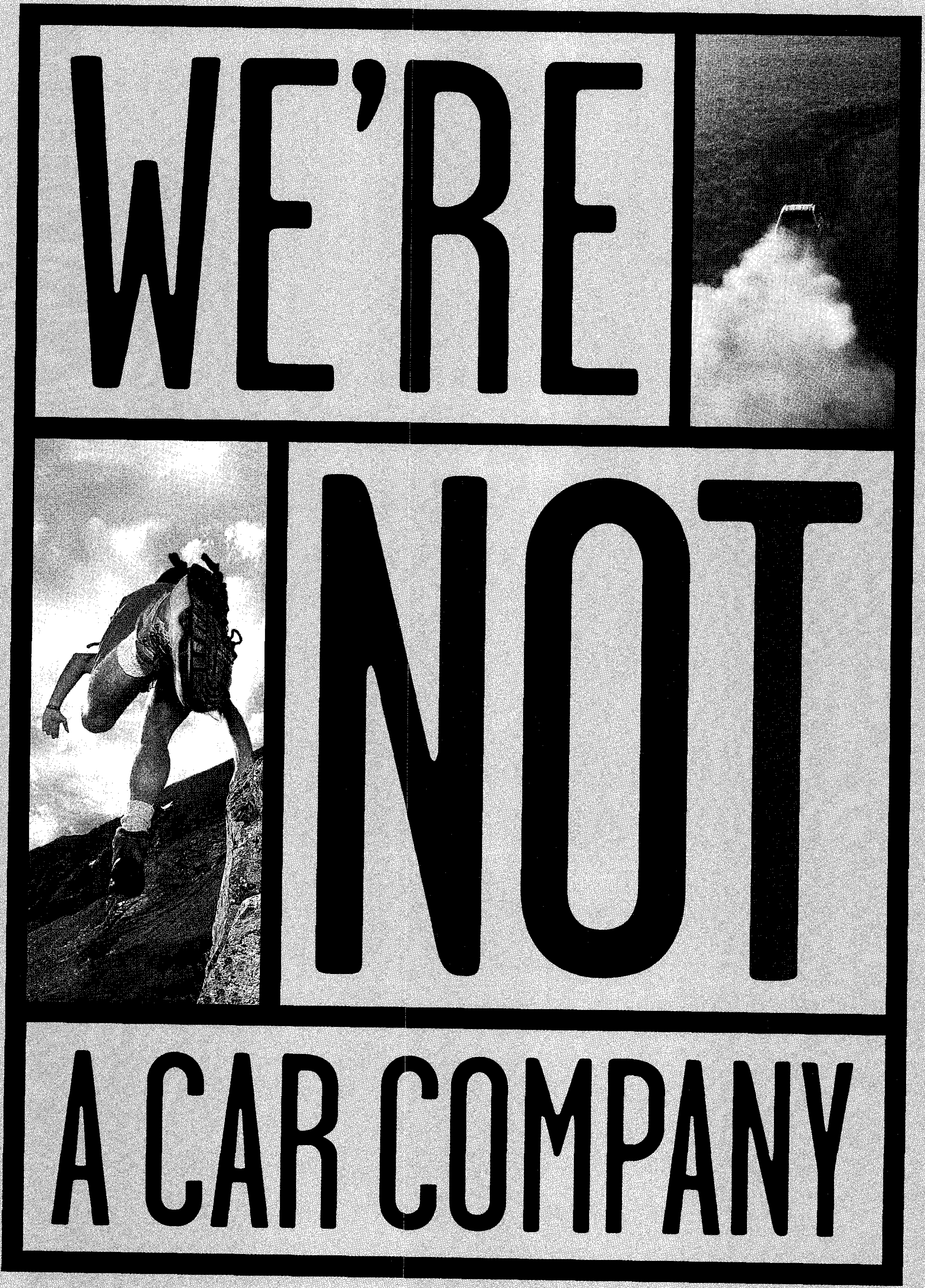
Music Mountain—Aug. 20 at 8: Works for soprano, flute, and harp by George Crumb, Peter Schickele, and others, performed by the Jubal Trio. . . . ¶ Aug. 22 at 3: The Cuarteto Latinoamericano has been doing yeoman's service for the Brazilian composer Heitor Villa-Lobos through its fine, ongoing recordings (on the Dorian label) of his complete string quartets. In this concert, the foursome plays the third of Villa-Lobos's seventeen, in addition to Boccherini's String Quartet in A Major (Op. 33, No. 6) and Turina's "La Oración del Torero"; bandoneonist Cesar Olguin assists in pieces by Piazzolla. . . . ¶ Aug. 29 at 3: The Miró String Quartet offers quartets by Beethoven (in C Major, Op. 59, No. 3) and Schubert (in A Minor, D, 804, the "Rosamunde"), in addition to Dohnányi's Piano Quintet (with Pamela Mia Paul assisting). (Falls Village, Conn. 860-824-7126.)

Maverick Concerts—Aug. 21 at 8: Frederic Hand plays guitar and lute pieces by Bach and several Renaissance masters, in addition to several of his own compositions. . . . ¶ Aug. 22 at 3: The Shanghai String Quartet plays Shostakovich's Sixth Quartet, along with quartets by Dvořák (in A-Flat Major, Op. 105) and Mozart (in D Major, K. 499). . . . ¶ Aug. 28 at 8: Anonymous 4, the women's medieval vocal quartet, performs love songs by the fourteenth-century composer Francesco Landini. . . . ¶ Aug. 29 at 3: Flutist Paula Robison, violinist Lucy Chapman, violist Scott Nickrenz, and cellist Laurence Lesser team up for a benefit concert that, in addition to music by Sidney Lanier and Beethoven, includes the première of Robert Starer's "Music for a Summer Afternoon." (Woodstock, N.Y. 914-679-8217.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

The Service Nowadays—If you're looking to attend the tennis finals at the U.S. Open, on Sept. 12, now is the time to start those desperate calls to influential people. But if you just want to see some vicious hard-court behavior up close, consider the qualifying rounds, where two hundred and fifty-six players (half of them men, half women) will compete over the course of five days for the tournament's remaining thirty-two slots. While the play in these rounds is only fractionally less ballistic than in the Open proper, the tickets, which are free, are a lot easier to get your mitts on. (National Tennis Center, Flushing Meadows–Corona Park. The qualifying rounds run Aug. 24-28; the Open begins Aug. 30, and continues through Sept. 12. For more information, call 718-760-6200.)

Readings—Aug. 19 at 7:30: By Breena Clarke, from her novel, "River, Cross My Heart." (Barnes & Noble, Broadway at 82nd St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ Aug. 20 at 7: By science-fiction novelist Samuel Delany, from his nonfiction account of sex in the city, "Times Square Red, Times Square Blue." (Housing Works Used Book Café, 126 Crosby St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ Aug. 26 at 9: By poets Akilah Oliver and Marcella Durand. (Bluestockings, 172 Allen St. No tickets necessary.)


WE'RE
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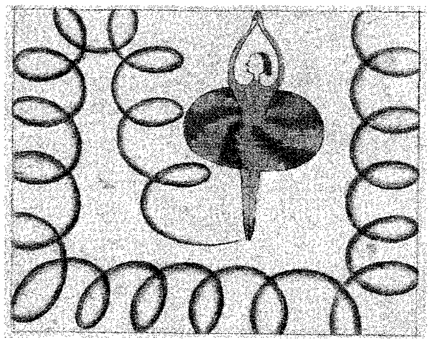
A CAR COMPANY

Two premier African-American companies, Ronald K. Brown/Evidence (at the Joyce, Sept. 28-Oct. 3) and Philadanco (at the New Victory, Oct. 1-10), provide the season's early spark. Brown tells moody stories with a mixture of whip-fast club-dance moves and sudden swoops of introspection. Philadanco's strength lies in its versatility—especially that of Hope Boykin, a tiny bobcat of a dancer with a serious vertical leap.

In October, the colonies of downtown dance—the Joyce, The Kitchen, Dance Theatre Workshop, Danspace Project, P.S. 122, et al.—confederate to produce "New Europe '99," a bouquet of avant-gardenias from the Old World. Compagnie Käfig, for example, performs a French-Algerian version of hip-hop (at the Hostos Center, Oct. 15-16) on a double bill with the Bronx-based Full Circle. At Joyce SoHo (Oct. 20-30), Berlin's Cie Felix Ruckert invites the audience to negotiate with the performers for private dances, performed in jerry-built rooms that are just big enough for one-on-one choreography.



BAM counters with several stellar international heavyweights in November: for "Danzón," the theatrical Pina Bausch is offering a pas de deux with a fish (a yellow-and-blue koi, projected on a scrim). From Tokyo's Ginza Theatre come the bald men of Sankai Juku, who talc their bodies and move with organic deliberation in a piece called "Hiyomeki (within a gentle vibration and agitation)."

The Flea Theatre offers a more down-home spectacle: Sarah East Johnson and Lava, an all-women troupe fresh from a summer session at Circus College, present the irresistibly muscular "Lava Love" (Sept. 9-Oct. 2), which features hoop diving, slo-mo balancing acts, trapeze choreography, and a dog show. —Kevin Conley

ART

The cultured public at the end of the nineteenth century was high on the future. Today, judging by this millennial autumn's slate of museum shows, we are coming out of the past like a boot out of mud. The mood is backward-looking—to the max at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, where "Egyptian Art in the Age of the Pyramids" ("230 masterpieces," we are promised, "from more than 30 collections") will be the main event. A bit more up-to-date is the Met's Costume Institute's unveiling in December of "Rock Style"—outfits of "15 to 20 major rock artists who have influenced style from the 1950s to the present." Bring your parents.

"The American Century: Art & Culture 1900-2000," the Whitney Museum of American Art's immodestly dubbed two-part immersion in yesteryear, will conclude with Part II—the last fifty years (starting Sept. 26). Organized by the former Whitney curator Lisa Phillips, it seems a cinch to improve on the strained triumphalism of Part I. If this show doesn't occasion spirited public arguments, we will know that the art world really is as comatose as it has often appeared of late.

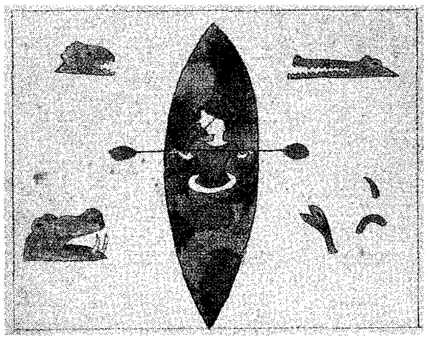
"MoMA2000" (the ba-boomp punchiness of oversell seems to be in our water lately, cholera-fashion) is the name of a series of scholarly shows at the Museum of Modern Art, starting in October, that will rejigger aspects of the museum's holdings while the institution undergoes physical expansion. The shows are "conceived as a preliminary laboratory" for the collection's eventual reinstallation.

Has the hangover from the nineteen-eighties' art bash worn off yet? Probably not, and an immense Franceso Clemente retrospective at the Guggenheim Museum (opening Oct. 7) may play to a tough crowd. The Italian painter—a fabulist and erotomane—will pit his unde-

URBAN ADVENTURE

Visitors to New York may think it's intrepid simply to squeeze through a closing subway door. But anyone who's been in town longer than, say, three minutes, moves on to bigger challenges.

On East 36th Street in Brooklyn, between Avenues S and Fillmore, archeologists and volunteers have been carefully sifting through the soil at the Lott House, a Dutch-American farmhouse, looking for artifacts of Dutch Colonial life in the eighteenth century. Their digging usually wraps up by the end of summer, but just last month, according to Chris Ricciardi, co-director of the project, an excited team unearthed the house's privy. The work on this discovery is likely to continue into the fall. Volunteers are invited to call 718-951-4714.



The thirty-third annual Mayor's Cup race brings some forty wooden schooners, sloops, cutters, ketches, and yawls, as well as three vintage America's Cup twelve-meter yachts, to New York Harbor on Sept. 18. You can contact the South Street Seaport to offer your services in hoisting a jib or to inquire about sponsoring a yacht. For more information, call 748-8600.

Lisa Westberg, project director of the Cherry Tree Association, leads the Third People's Environmental Bike Tour of the South Bronx on Sept. 11. The three-hour trip includes stops at community gardens, cultural institutions, and environmental sites in the area. Westberg, a twenty-seven-year-old Swede who moved to the Bronx five years ago, started the tour because, she says, it's a good way for outsiders to "confront their prejudices and fears about the South Bronx and for locals to learn about their neighborhood." To sign up, call 718-292-6443.

The Hi-Tec Adventure Racing Series comes to Orchard Beach on Oct. 17. This gruelling event consists of a one-to-three-mile kayak paddle, a ten-to-fifteen-mile mountain-bike course, a five-to-eight-mile trail run, and up to ten special tests, which remain a surprise until the racers encounter them. Past tests have included climbing a Crisco-covered ramp and slogging through a mud bog. For more information, call 818-707-8867. —John J. Donohue

A FALL PREVIEW

THE THEATRE

THIS critic's prayers have been answered: Dame Edna, the wonderfully malicious housewife/superstar who is the invention of Australian dadaist and dandy Barry Humphries, is bringing her latest caring-and-sharing sendup of celebrity, "Dame Edna: The Royal Tour," to Broadway's Booth Theatre (beginning Sept. 15). If her aromatherapist, gynecologist, and numerologist have everything in balance, it will be nude cartwheels and tears before bedtime.

Dame Edna seems to be an omen: the portents for a stimulating fall season look good, beginning with some nontraditional theatrics. The newest British funny men on the block, Shaun Foley and Hamish McColl—a.k.a. The Right Size—are also testing the American waters, with "Do You Come Here Often?" (starting Sept. 16 at P.S. 122), their Olivier Award-winning combination of slapstick and character comedy about two men stuck in a bathroom for twenty-five years. In the new-and-promising department, there's the gnarly, brilliant Suzan-Lori Parks's "In the Blood," beginning Oct. 26 at the Public, and, at Lincoln Center, the choreographer Susan Stroman and the writer John Weidman have worked up a genre they call "dance play"—three stories told through dance and dialogue, titled "Contact" (starting Sept. 9).

A number of plays by topflight dramatists (including Shakespeare) will be crowding the New York boards. Arthur Kopit's slickly written "Y2K" (beginning in early November at Manhattan Theatre Club), which was the hit of this year's Humana Festival, in Louisville, Kentucky, is a techno-psychological thriller about how the manipulation of data destroys a couple, for reasons that they never understand. David Mamet is being given a full season by the Atlantic Theatre Company, beginning in late September with his compelling "The Water Engine." By way of London, Peter Schaffer's "Amadeus" returns to Broadway in December, with the glittering headliners David Suchet (Salieri) and Michael Sheen (Mozart), directed by Sir Peter Hall. The excellent Liev Schreiber gets to be the glass of fashion and the mould of form in Andrei Serban's production of "Hamlet," at the Public (Nov. 23). And at the Roundabout's Gramercy Theatre, Ireland's greatest living playwright, Brian Friel, will be represented in September with his newest drama, "Give Me Your Answer, Do!"

In honor of Noël Coward's centenary, the best of Coward's postwar plays, "Waiting in the Wings," about theatricals in an old-age home, is scheduled for December, starring Lauren Bacall, and Broadway's most fabulous and spiky flower, Elaine Stritch, reprises her role as Mimi Paragon, in a concert version of Coward's "Sail Away" (at Carnegie Hall, Nov. 3-7 and Nov. 9-13).

The fall's big Broadway-musical revival is Michael Blakemore's version of Cole Porter's solid-gold "Kiss Me, Kate" (starting in late October). And what would a Broadway season be without a Stephen Sondheim revival? This year, "Putting It Together," a revue of his oldies and goodies, arrives at the Barrymore in November, starring Carol Burnett. It should put even more shine on the old sourpuss's musical halo.

Of the new Broadway musicals, my money is on "Wrong Mountain," about the disaster of success, which marks the return of the playwright David Hirson ("La Bête") and the ingenious British director Richard Jones. Of the adventurous musical offerings Off Broadway, Sybille Pearson and Mel Marvin's "True History and Real Adventures" (from Nov. 17, at the Vineyard), in which a Scottish girl journeys through America in search of Calamity Jane, has the whiff of fun. It stars Kathleen Chalfant. Playwrights Horizons' musical version of James Joyce's "The Dead" (starting Oct. 1), by Richard Nelson (book) and Shaun Davey (music) also sounds tasty, but the big musical question mark of the fall is whether the composer-lyricist Michael John LaChiusa, who is the darling of institutional theatres, can win the hearts of big-paying customers with his updated look at the Medea myth, "Marie Christine" (from Oct. 28, at the Vivian Beaumont), starring Audra McDonald and directed by Graciela Daniele. —JOHN LAHR

DANCE

THE Balanchine "Rashomon" continues this fall, when both Edward Villella and Suzanne Farrell bring their views of Mr. B.'s legacy to local stages. Villella's Miami City Ballet, a seasoned company that mirrors its founder in the warmth of its bravura style, makes a tantalizingly brief appearance at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center (Oct. 9-10); Farrell's ad-hoc troupe will show its stuff at the New Victory Theatre (Nov. 18-28). Farrell, whose promising 1995 Kennedy Center season was marred by clumsy corps work, wisely concentrates on her specialty this time: her new program consists of only solos and duets. Villella brings "Jewels"—the "Rubies" segment was made especially for him—and follows with a matinée that includes Balanchine's sibling-rivalry classic, "Prodigal Son."

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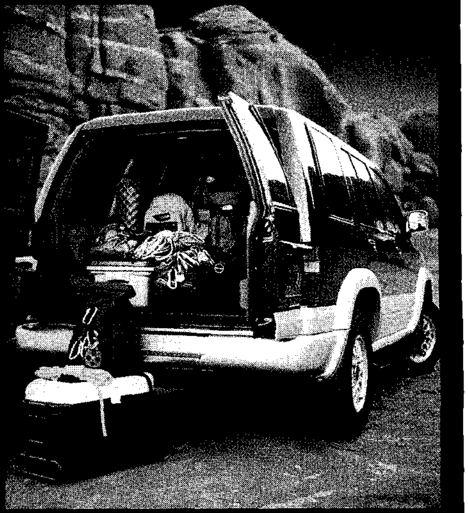

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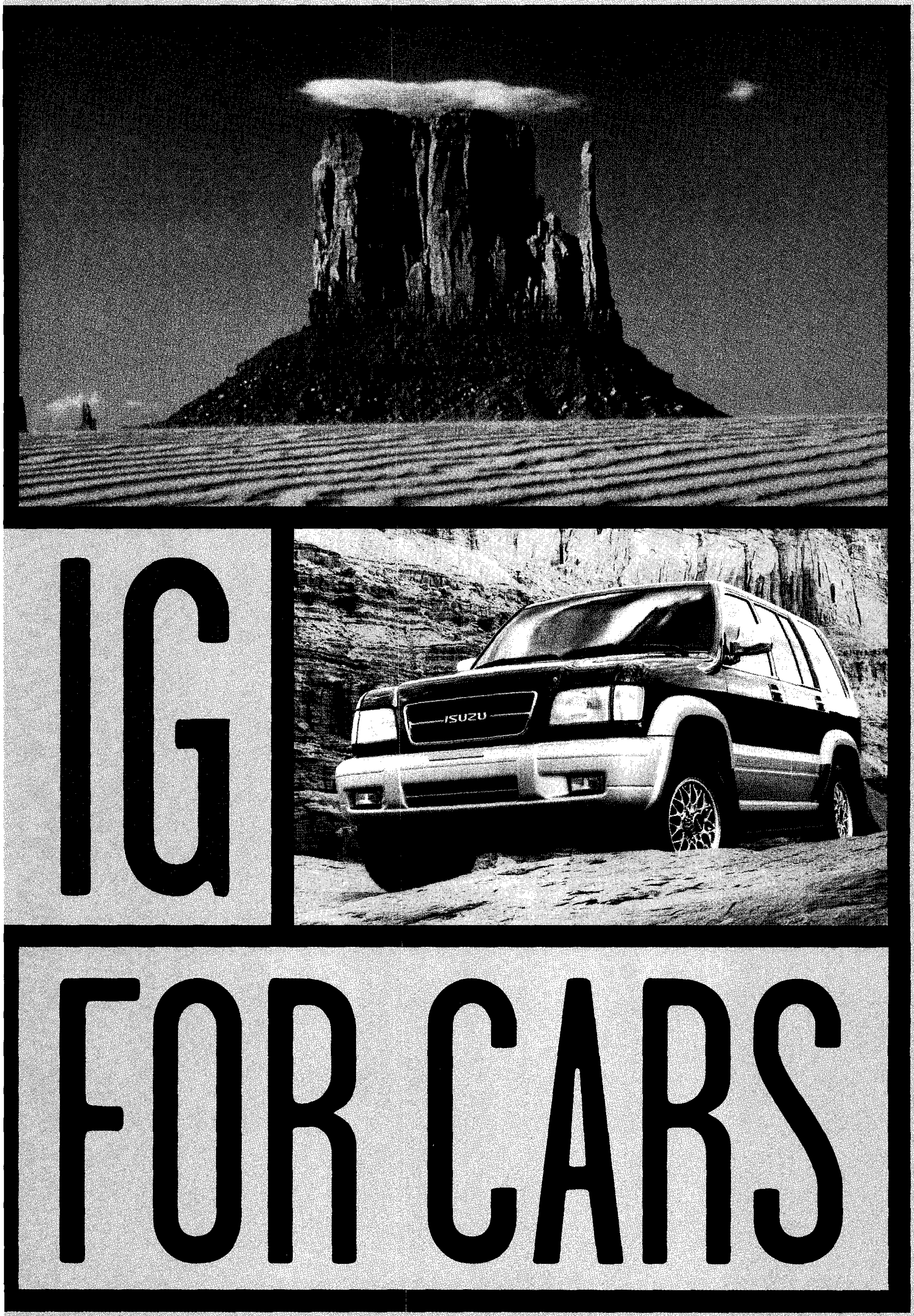
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THE MOVIES

What is the link between Satan and a Roman Catholic priest? Easy: both are played by Gabriel Byrne. The Evil One, who descends to earth to look for a date, has to contend with Arnold Schwarzenegger in "End of Days"; the priest is dispatched by the Vatican to verify the supernatural experiences of Patricia Arquette in "Stigmata." Such are the unlikely couplings thrown up by the movies due this fall. To learn that Wes Craven, for instance, will be delivering "Scream 3" will be gratifying to scholars of slash; to learn that he has also directed "Music of the Heart," in which Meryl Streep gives violin tuition to the embattled youth of East Harlem, is more of a surprise. What next? Helena Bonham Carter playing opposite Meat Loaf?

Well, yes. The English rose and the bat out of hell lend support to "The Fight Club," in which Brad Pitt and Edward Norton lash out at each other for the delectation of director David Fincher. The Fincher C.V. includes "Alien^3" and "Seven," so you may want to bring night-vision goggles for a clear view of the punch-ups. Trends, as opposed to happy coincidences, are always hard to call in the fluid world of movie releasing, but it does seem that a dark millennial creepiness has been pencilled in by the studios. Hence the new Tim Burton movie, "Sleepy Hollow," which squares the weirdness by mixing Johnny Depp with Christopher Walken. Depp also floats by next week in "The Astronaut's Wife," as a spaceman freaked out by something he saw in the void. Deeper still, there is Roman Polanski's "The Ninth Gate," about a bookish type sucked into a diabolical conspiracy. It stars someone called Johnny Depp.

There are a few Deppless movies in the offing, though, if you search hard enough, and some of them should wipe away the disappointments of the current, puffed-up summer. Michael Mann directs Al Pacino and Russell Crowe in "The Insider," the story of the "60 Minutes" tobacco-settlement interview. Bruce Willis teams up with Nick Nolte in Alan Rudolph's "Breakfast of Champions," and then with Michelle Pfeiffer and Paul Reiser in "The Story of Us," directed by Rob Reiner. The basic rule is that no movie is ever as good as it sounds, but you can't not want to see "Bringing Out the Dead," set among harassed New York medics, which teams Nicolas Cage with Tom Sizemore, and director Martin Scorsese with his old sparring partner Paul Schrader. Then there's "The End of the Affair," Neil Jordan's take on Graham Greene, with the swoon-heavy pairing of Ralph Fiennes and Julianne Moore; George Clooney and Mark Wahlberg in David O. Russell's "Three Kings"; and "The Green Mile," a Stephen King serialized novel, adapted and directed by Frank Darabont, who gave us "The Shawshank Redemption." The latter stars Tom Hanks, which is a way of saying that it will make a whole lot of money. As for "Toy Story 2," which brings back Hanks, Tim Allen, and the rest of the gang, start counting the receipts now. To infinity, and then some. —Anthony Lane

Revivals

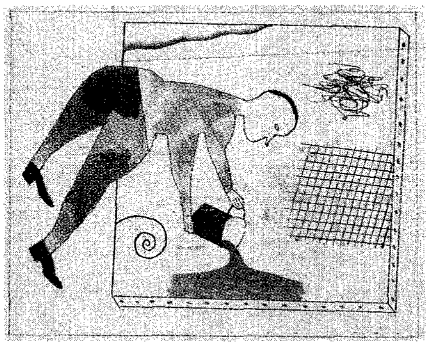
In 1942, in his first column as film critic of *The Nation*, James Agee spoke of "a peculiarly sentimental kind of sensitiveness which is common to many witty, sad, able, and fastidious men." Agee was referring to Noël Coward, whose Second World War drama "In Which We Serve," which Coward co-directed with David Lean, had just opened, and Agee's procession of adjectives was a careful attempt to define a particular mode of homosexual sensibility. Yet if Coward, as Agee suggested, lacked power as an artist, his superb wit and theatrical skill have worn very well. Born one hundred years ago, Coward (who died in 1973) will be the subject of centenary celebrations this fall at both the Museum of Modern Art and the Brooklyn Academy of Music. MOMA's tribute, running from Sept. 23 to Oct. 5, offers a comprehensive showing of films adapted from Coward's plays (such as "Blithe Spirit" and "Cavalcade"), as well as films that he directed, wrote, starred in, or scored. BAM's series, titled "Mad About the Boy," after one of Coward's most famous songs, also salutes the film work (Sept. 17-Oct. 17); an allied series, running at the Museum of Television and Radio, will be devoted to Coward's work on television, including his memorable teaming with Mary Martin in CBS's "Ford Star Jubilee."

The films of Pedro Almodóvar display a more exuberant, brightly colored gay sensibility, and Almodóvar—whose highly anticipated new film, "All About My Mother," will open the New York Film Festival on Sept. 24—is receiving a complete retrospective at the American Museum of the Moving Image, in Astoria (Oct. 2-24). The great, unpredictable documentarian Errol Morris also has a new film this fall—"Mr. Death"—and MOMA has programmed a retrospective of Morris's earlier work in November. The Film Society of Lincoln Center will devote retrospectives to the Taiwanese master Hou Hsiou-Hsien (Oct. 13-28) and to Pietro Germi, one of the great Italian directors of the sixties (Sept. 9-Oct. 8); and the A.M.M.I. will throw one for Blake Edwards (Sept. 11-25). That museum is also bringing in the millennium with a series of dark or farcical futuristic movies (Dec. 18-Jan. 2), including "Metropolis," "Blade Runner," and Woody Allen's "Sleeper." —David Denby niable charm, especially in graphic mediums, against pesky suspicions that he is overrated.

In the galleries, we will track the vicissitudes of two trends. One is small-scale, ironically unironic figurative painting with real finish-of-the-century crackle. Will there or won't there be fresh names to set beside the now familiar ones of Luc Tuymans, John Currin, Elizabeth Peyton, Karen Kilimnik, and Lisa Yuskavage? Then there is the fairly rocketing maturity of video installations as an independent art form. If you see any show advertised that promises work by one or more of these recently emergent whizzes, go at once: Eija-Liisa Ahtila, Pippilotti Rist, Shirin Neshat, Douglas Gordon, Jane and Louise Wilson, Steve McQueen, and Doug Aitken. —Peter Schjeldahl

Architecture

You could say this will be the autumn of No More Mr. Nice Building. The most important architectural event this season will be the opening of a twenty-three-story tower of glass on East Fifty-seventh Street by the Parisian architect Christian de Portzamparc which is at the very least insouciant, and might even be called aggressive. Portzamparc declares that the age of retro New York skyscrapers is over and in its place offers up lots of sharp angles and glass in pale aqua and soft, translucent gray. The building will serve as the new American headquarters for LVMH, the French luxury-goods conglomerate. In the same vein, but considerably more horizontal, is Bernard Tschumi's new Alfred Lerner Student Center at Columbia, a grandiose essay in glass and metal that embellishes Charles McKim's classical campus with a glass façade a hundred feet long and sixty feet high.



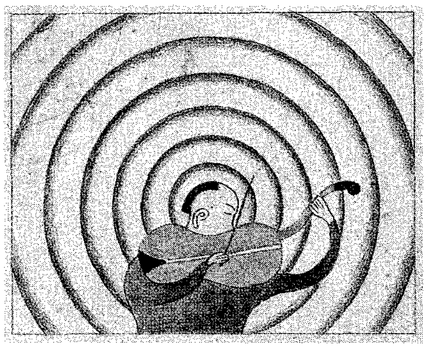
Indoors, two exhibitions are of exceptional interest: a tribute to the work of Aldo Rossi at the Max Protetch Gallery, in Chelsea, which marks the second anniversary of the great Italian architect's untimely death from injuries suffered in an automobile accident, in 1997 (Sept. 11-Oct. 6); and "The Work of Charles and Ray Eames," at the Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum (starting Oct. 12). The show presents the full range of these remarkable California designers' ideas and products, including their witty, engaging films and their early explorations into the potential of computers.

—Paul Goldberger

MUSIC

The end of the twentieth century has forced several of the city's more tradition-bound musical institutions to acknowledge that the twentieth century has indeed taken place. The New York Philharmonic season is awash in works from the past ninety-nine years, including virtually everything by Aaron Copland. The Metropolitan Opera has decided to add another opera to its unimpressive backlog of world premières: John Harbison's "The Great Gatsby" will be heard for the first time on Dec. 20. Carnegie Hall has invited the pianist Maurizio Pollini to customize fifteen concerts to his own taste, and his taste runs to the recherché. The Pollini-inspired programs begin on Oct. 10 with the almost abusively highbrow combination of Schoenberg's Three Piano Pieces (Op. 11), Stockhausen's "Klavierstück X," and Beethoven's "Hammerklavier" Sonata.

The Philharmonic has consecutive world premières of works by Thomas Adès, John Corigliano, Kaija Saariaho, Somei Satoh, and Hans Werner Henze planned for Nov. 11. New York City Opera adds to the swirl of composer names with "Central Park," a joint effort by Deborah Drattell, Michael Torke, and Robert Beaser. Perhaps the most significant event in contemporary music is the return of John Adams's "Nixon in China" to BAM. This is a concert performance by the Brooklyn Philharmonic, but it should reveal how epochal Adams's 1987 opera has become, and how wickedly charming it remains.



More conventional goings on will accompany the countdown to the millennium. On Nov. 22, the Met premières a new production of "Tristan und Isolde," with the grand voices of Ben Heppner, Jane Eaglen, and René Pape presiding. On Oct. 14 and Oct. 17, the Tallis Scholars reprise last season's triumphant residency at St. Ignatius Loyola, singing masses based on the folk tune "L'Homme Armé." At Avery Fisher Hall, on Nov. 7-8, the Lahti Symphony Orchestra, an excellent ensemble from a remote Finnish town, plays two Sibelius symphonies under the direction of Osmo Vänskä—maybe the best Sibelius conductor. Looking ahead, Radu Lupu will perform one of his winter piano séances at Carnegie on Jan. 22. Even if the Y2K bug has destroyed the rest of civilization, he will play Schubert more beautifully than anyone. —Alex Ross

Jazz, Rock, etc.

In the midst of the music industry's post-mega-merger twitching and MP3-fuelled Internet hysteria, it's the scrappy indie bands that are once again making some of the best music around. The label Matador may have spent much of this decade in bed with the majors (first Atlantic, then Capitol), but it's now single again, and it's throwing a three-day party at Irving Plaza to celebrate its tenth anniversary. On Sept. 23, Cornelius, a Japanese sonic mixologist, joins the Arsonists and Non Phixion, both rap outfits from Brooklyn. The following night features lo-fi heroes Pavement and Cat Power. The party winds up on Sept. 25, with the eternally hip Hoboken deities Yo la Tengo.

A bit of the independent downtown spirit moves uptown in October with the opening of Makor, an intimate new club (35 W. 67th St.) with eclectic jazz-and-funk bookings. Guitar whiz Charlie Hunter and percussionist Adam Cruz open the room on Oct. 6; fine acts to follow include the Brazilian guitarist Vinicius Cantuária and drummer Leon Parker. —John J. Donohue

Someone must be slipping those so-called "smart drugs" into the drinks of New York's jazz-club proprietors—they've lined up some remarkably imaginative shows. Iridium leads the pack, with a duo of guitarist Jim Hall and bassist Dave Holland—like Mozart jamming with Beethoven—on Sept. 14-19. A week later, tenor saxophonist David Murray's rarely heard octet pays tribute to John Coltrane.

The Blue Note starts the season off with an incendiary show: the pairing of pianist Cecil Taylor and drummer Elvin Jones. (Sept. 7-9, late shows only.) On Nov. 2, a week of bass nirvana begins, when the mighty Ray Brown is joined by saxophonist Stanley Turrentine. The following week, Brown turns it up a notch with Super Bass, featuring Christian McBride and John Clayton, Jr. In October, the Jazz Standard pulls a smart move, turning over the last two weeks of the month to Billy Higgins, the astonishing drummer who's now playing at his peak.

—Steve Futterman

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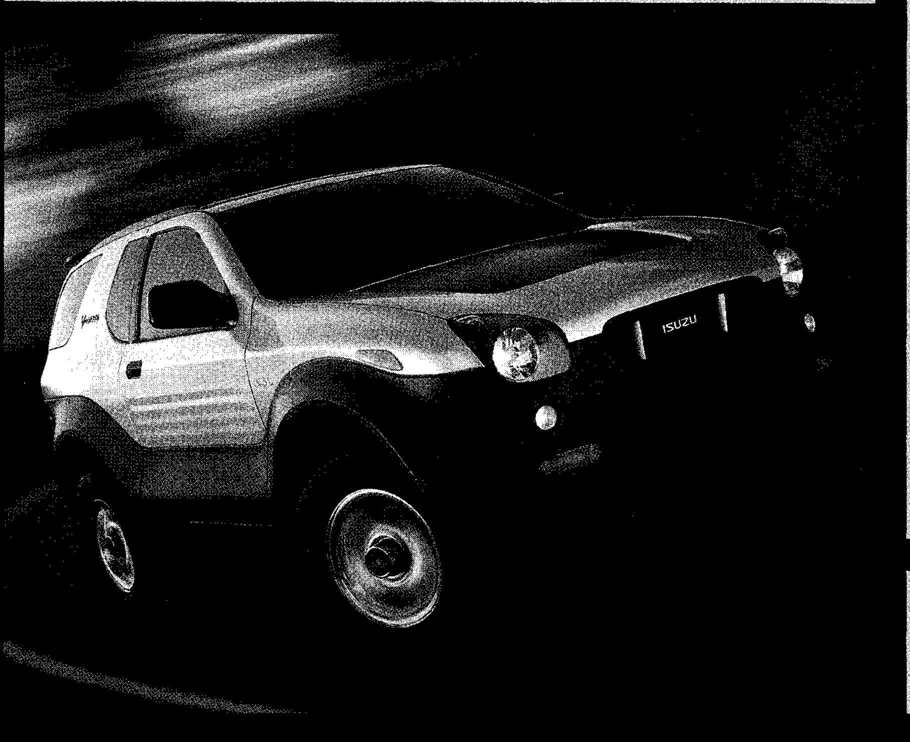

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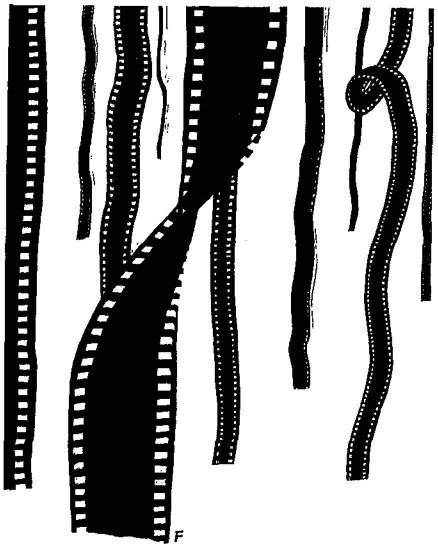


THE MOVIES

OPENING

A Dog of Flanders—Kevin Brodie directs this adaptation of the children's book about a boy and his dog in eighteenth-century Belgium. Opening Aug. 27.

Dudley Do-Right—A live-action version of the television cartoon about a Canadian Mountie, with Brendan Fraser, Sarah Jessica Parker, and Alfred Molina. Written and directed by Hugh Wilson. Opening Aug. 27.

In Too Deep—A thriller about an undercover cop, with Omar Epps, LL Cool J, Pam Grier, and Nia Long; directed by Michael Rymer. Opening Aug. 25.

Knockin' on Heaven's Door—A buddy adventure movie, directed by Thomas Jahn. In German. Opening Aug. 20. (Art Greenwich Twin.)

Lucie Aubrac—Claude Berri's film (based on a novel by Lucie Aubrac) about the French Resistance movement during the Second World War. With Daniel Auteuil and Carole Bouquet. In French. Opening Aug. 27. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

Mickey Blue Eyes—A romantic comedy about an Englishman (Hugh Grant) who falls in love with the daughter (Jeanne Tripplehorn) of a New York gangster (James Caan). Directed by Kelly Makin. Opening Aug. 20. (Chelsea Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, State, and Village East Cinemas.)

The Muse—One of the daughters of Zeus (Sharon Stone) helps a Hollywood screenwriter (Albert Brooks) regain his creativity. Also with Jeff Bridges and Andie MacDowell; directed by Brooks. Opening Aug. 27.

Nobody—A drama about three businessmen who become involved with a gang. Directed by Shundo Okawa. In Japanese. Opening Aug. 20. (The Screening Room.)

On the Ropes—A documentary about three Bed-Stuy boxers training for the Golden Gloves. Directed by Nanette Burstein and Brett Morgen. Aug. 18-24. (Film Forum.)

Perfect Blue—An animated psychological thriller, directed by Satoshi Kon. Opening Aug. 20. (Cinema Village.)

The Source—Chuck Workman's documentary about Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, William S. Burroughs, and other members of the Beat Generation. Opening Aug. 25. (Film Forum.)

Stiff Upper Lips—A romantic comedy (directed by Gary Sinyor) about a British upper-class family in 1908. Opening Aug. 27. (Eastside Playhouse and Village East Cinemas.)

Teaching Mrs. Tingle—A comedy about a group of high-school students who take their history teacher (Helen Mirren) hostage. Written and directed by Kevin Williamson. Opening Aug. 20.

The 13th Warrior—An adventure thriller, based on Michael Crichton's novel "Eaters of the Dead," with Antonio Banderas and directed by John McTiernan. Opening Aug. 27.

Universal Soldier: The Return—An action-adventure story, with Jean-Claude Van Damme. Directed by Mic Rodgers. Opening Aug. 20.

The Very Thought of You—Nick Hamm's romantic comedy about three London friends (Rufus Sewell, Tom Hollander, and Joseph Fiennes) and an American girl (Monica Potter). Opening Aug. 27. (Angelika Film Center.)

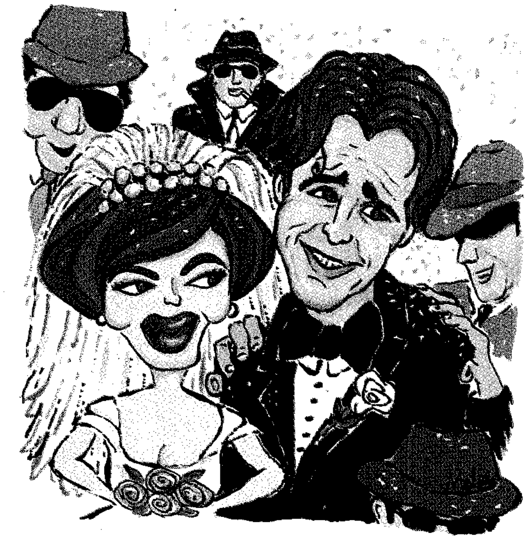
The Wounds—A drama about teen-age criminals in Belgrade, written and directed by Srdjan Dragojevic. In Serbo-Croatian. Opening Aug. 20. (Cinema Village.)

FILM NOTES

(If a movie has been reviewed recently in The Current Cinema, the date of its review is given.)

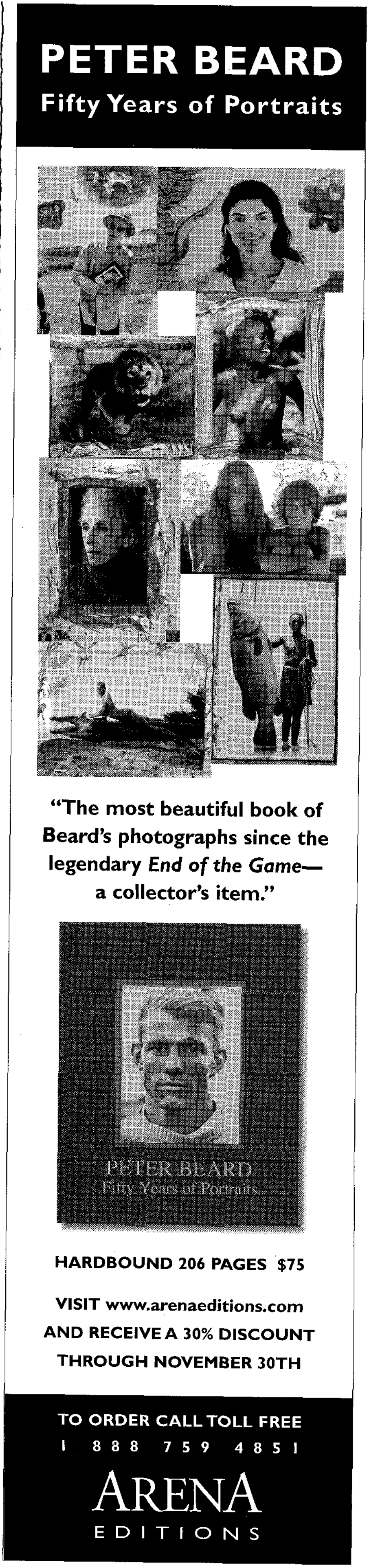
American Pie—Four senior boys at a Michigan high school decide to end their status as virgins and undergo various erotic adventures—some ridiculous or humiliating, some gratifying—which they then relate to one another. The writer, Adam Herz, and the team of Paul and Chris Weitz (the first directs, the second produces) aim low and score. "American Pie" is often funny, but you may come out depressed by it. The coarseness in itself is not offensive, but the notion that privacy couldn't possibly be a value that matters to anyone is.—*David Denby* (7/12/99) (Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, and Union Square.)

Arlington Road—Jeff Bridges plays a college lecturer specializing in terrorism who befriends a neighbor couple named the Langs (Tim Robbins and an even scarier Joan Cusack); the question is whether they are befriending him back or using him for evil purposes. Mark Pellington's paranoid movie tends to state its intentions too baldly, and his evident desire to contribute to the debate over America's self-inflicted wounds seems like wishful thinking; but the film is undoubtedly creepy (the first ten minutes, in particular, are tough to watch), and most of the shocks strike home.—*Anthony Lane* (7/19/99) (Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, 64th and 2nd, and Village East Cinemas.)



Opening August 20, Jeanne Tripplehorn and Hugh Grant in Kelly Makin's "Mickey Blue Eyes."

ROBERT MELEE



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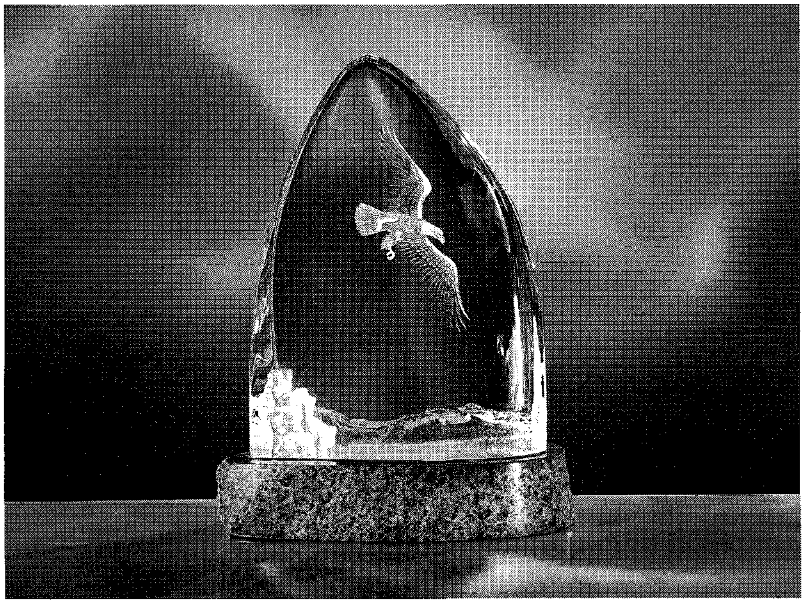

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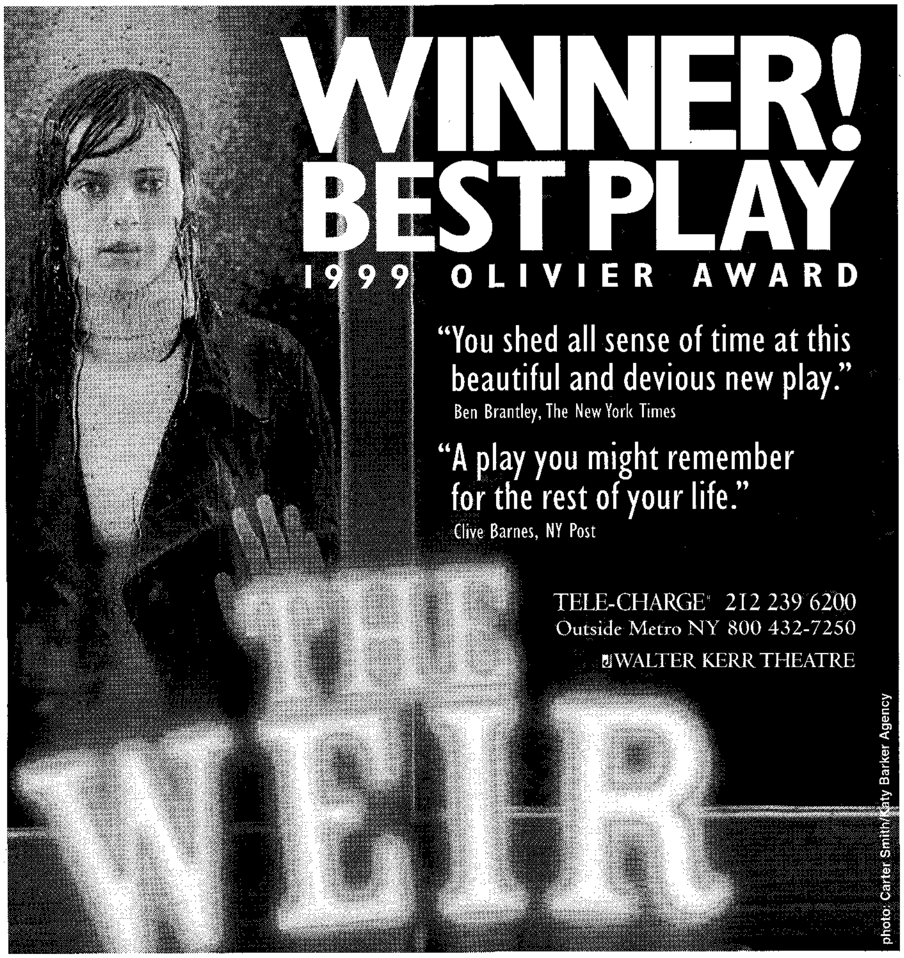

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Bhaji on the Beach (1994)—This tangy British feminist comedy-drama portrays a diverse group of Indian women from Birmingham on a day trip to the working-class beach resort of Blackpool. It's humorous and prickly when charting generational and cultural rifts, erratic and heavy-handed at depicting the younger women's angry men. The director, Gurinder Chadha, has a palpable affection for her performers that overcomes her stop-and-go pacing.—*Michael Sragow* (Museum of Modern Art; Aug. 29 and Aug. 31.)

The Blair Witch Project—A cunningly conceived and crafted exercise in suggestibility and terror. A student film crew goes out into the Maryland woods, attempting to record traces of a predatory witch who has, according to legend, held sway in the area for two hundred years. What we see is presented to us as the remnants of the project after the crew has disappeared. The footage has the haphazard continuity of tormented fragments; it's all handheld stuff, caught on the run. The documentary project is, of course, fiction, created by five film nuts from Orlando, headed by Eduardo Sanchez and Dan Myrick. If it doesn't play at midnight in every college-campus theatre in the country, then midnight isn't what it used to be. In black-and-white and color.—*D.D.* (7/26/99) (Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Olympia, and State.)

Bowfinger—The new Steve Martin picture is written by Steve Martin; it also stars Steve Martin in the title role. If that makes it sound like a vanity project, fear not; this is probably the least vain movie of the year. Martin disperses gags and characters with a generosity that borders on the manic. Bobby Bowfinger is a small-time, not to say failed, movie producer in Los Angeles who grabs at one last chance: he decides to make a movie without informing the star—Kit Ramsey (Eddie Murphy), at once the most heavily protected and the most uncontrolled actor in Hollywood. It's a great conceit, and it flows naturally into a series of turbid set pieces, as Bowfinger and his fellow-hopefuls (played with a will by Christine Baranski and Heather Graham, among others) lure the hapless Kit into scenes that will (a) cause him to react like an action hero, and (b) drive him crazy. The climax feels a little undernourished, maybe because no one would actually line up to see Bowfinger's amateur efforts, however sly his technique; but the comedy is so genial, and is directed at such a gallop by Frank Oz, that you can forgive it almost anything. With Terence Stamp as a mental-therapy guru, otherwise known as a fraud.—*A.L.* (8/16/99) (Coronet Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Olympia, Orpheum VII, State, and Village Theatre VII.)

Deep Blue Sea—A degraded cross between "Jaws" and "Frankenstein." Medical researchers, with the best intentions, create super-intelligent sharks, which then turn their teeth on the scientists. Scary, absurd, inessential. With the spectacular Saffron Burrows as a singularly stupid scientist, Samuel L. Jackson as the pompous financial backer of the project, and many other actors, including Thomas Jane and LL Cool J, playing characters with varying class backgrounds. They all get chomped except for two; at least it's fun to guess who will survive. The disgraceful script is by Duncan Kennedy, Donna Powers, and Wayne Powers. Directed with occasional flashes of nasty wit by Renny Harlin.—*D.D.* (Criterion Center, 84th Street Sixplex, Kips Bay Theatre, Metro Cinema, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 72nd Street East, and Village Theatre VII.)

Dick—Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, and State.)

The Dinner Game—Francis Veber's movie sounds disappointingly courteous; the original French title, "Le Dîner de Cons," is much ruder and certainly closer to the misanthropic spirit of this farce. The premise is as entertaining as you could hope for: every Wednesday, a bunch of smart young Parisians hold a dinner, to which each of them must invite a complete idiot. In this case, Pierre (Thierry Lhermitte) is delighted with his latest catch, Pignon (Jacques Villeret), a spherical buffoon whose principal talent is for making models out of matchsticks. Needless to say, Pierre's plan stumbles when Pignon offers to help him sort out his life. No one could claim that the film is a distinguished contribution to cinema, but it would be churlish to resist its geniality and speed. In French.—*A.L.* (BAM Rose Cinemas and Paris.)

Eyes Wide Shut—A stiff, alas. The late Stanley Kubrick's last movie, based on Arthur Schnitzler's novella "Traumnovelle" (1926), is about a New York doctor (Tom Cruise) whose wife (Nicole Kidman) unexpectedly confesses her sexual interest in a young naval officer she spotted during a vacation. This revelation sends the doctor out into the streets of New York at night, where he is approached by a variety of women, undergoes perverse adventures, and finally winds up at an enormous, absurd orgy. Kubrick's direction—ponderously deliberate and distant, lacking in the intimacy that the movie would seem to be crying out for—never gets a firm grip on either fantasy or reality.—*D.D.* (7/26/99) (Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, State, and Village Theatre VII.)

The Good, the Bad and the Ugly (1968)—In this Sergio Leone spaghetti Western, if a man crosses a street in Santa Fe, the street looks half a mile wide; a farmer's hut has rooms opening into rooms into the distance, like the Metropolitan Museum; a cowtown hotel has a plush lobby big enough for a political convention. The movie is like "High Noon" and "The Ox-Bow Incident" and a dozen others all scrambled together and playing in a giant echo chamber. The bad men are preposterously evil—larger-than-life parodies—and each wound they inflict is insanely garish. With Clint Eastwood, Eli Wallach, and Lee Van Cleef. Score by Ennio Morricone.—*Pauline Kael* (American Museum of the Moving Image; Aug. 22 and Aug. 28.)

La Grande Illusion (1937)—The melancholy Erich von Stroheim, as an aristocratic German officer, and the elegant Pierre Fresnay, as his French counterpart, make friends across national lines in Jean Renoir's heartbreaking classic set in a German prison camp during the First World War. The movie also features Marcel Dalio, as the French-Jewish prisoner who receives many packages from home, and Jean Gabin, as the working-class hero Maréchal. Renoir's universalist sentiment angered the Nazis, who confiscated the negative in 1940 and moved it to Berlin, only to have the Red Army take it to the Soviet Union in 1945. Though the negative was returned to France in the sixties, it was only recently restored, and the new prints made from it are a revelation—the natural light in the outdoor scenes is beautiful, the little prison-camp entertainment show glows, the sound is clear and detailed. The movie remains as stirring and sweet-souled as ever. In French.—*D.D.* (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.)

The Haunting—Shirley Jackson's novel "The Haunting of Hill House" was first filmed by Robert Wise, in 1963, with Julie Harris and Claire Bloom. Now Jan De Bont ("Speed") has revisited the same unholy ground, and the leading roles go to Lili Taylor and Catherine Zeta-Jones. A professional fear expert named Dr. Marrow (Liam Neeson) asks the two women to stay at Hill House for a few sleepless nights, little knowing that the place is stalked by the ghost of bad movies past. Of the many flaws in this picture—it is, for instance, overlong, overdecorated, overplayed, and scripted with less coherence than a Scrabble board—the most troublesome is the evolution of old, cold houses,

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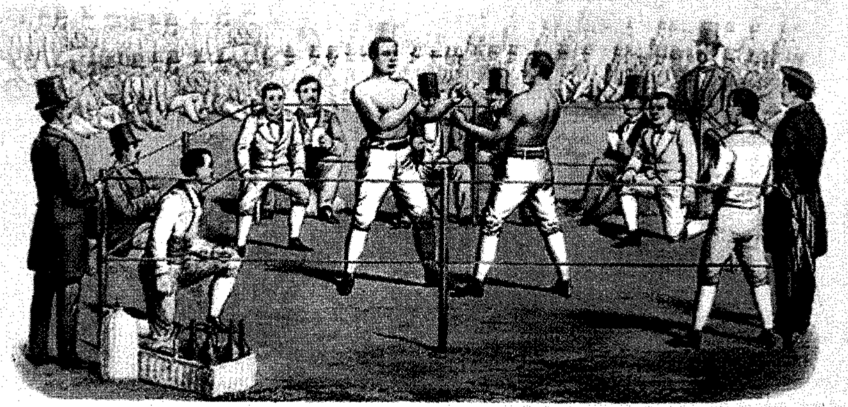

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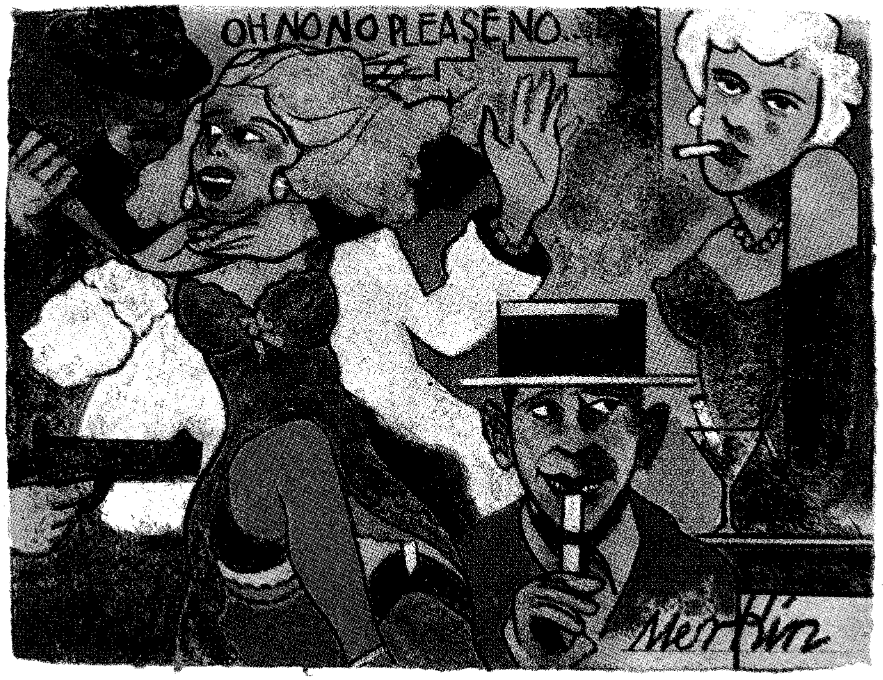
which were barely scary in the nineteen-sixties, into lumps of real estate.—*A.L.* (8/2/99) (Criterion Center, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII.)

I Know Where I'm Going (1945)—This romance is set in large part during a gale in the Western Isles of Scotland. It features dense fog, a squall, and a huge, roaring whirlpool. It also features Art Deco images of the young Wendy Hiller as an assured, impudent working girl who is scheduled to marry a rotten-rich, middle-aged tycoon, until she's caught in that storm. She meets a kind-faced naval officer (Roger Livesey); he's the impoverished Laird of Kiloran, and after a few days and nights of his gentle Gaelic voice she's thoroughly confused. Written, produced, and directed by Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger, this is a charmer of a movie. In a party sequence, everything else stops while we listen to the rapid group singing of the Highlanders: it's a soul-satisfying interlude.—*P.K.* (Museum of Modern Art; Aug. 24 and Aug. 28.)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RICHARD MERKIN

Inspector Gadget—A short, meaningless blast of fun from Disney. The TV series is expanded, but not by much; the special effects have a cheerful, magic-toyshop feel to them, and the plot is equally low-tech. A humble security guard (Matthew Broderick) is blown up and then reconstituted; under his trademark raincoat (which makes him look like a dirty old man) lurk a thousand gizmos. Each of his fingertips, for instance, contains a different tool, and his head can fly upward on a spring. Thus accoutred, our man is ready to fight the force of evil, as incarnated in the unlikely person of Rupert Everett. A quandary: should Broderick and Everett be embarrassed to find themselves in this fluff, or should we be grateful that they agreed to lend it a little class?—*A.L.* (8/2/99) (East 86th Street Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Sutton, and Union Square.)

Living in Oblivion (1995)—Tom DiCillo's movie about movies is slight but smart, and it doesn't overstay its welcome. Steve Buscemi plays a harassed director trying to make a low-budget picture in New York who suffers a plague of glitches that range from sour milk in the crew's coffee to an angry dwarf. It's the ideal part for Buscemi: pallid, ratty, and pop-eyed, he has the air of a man who is deeply in love with movies and wishes he weren't. The film feels horribly accurate, but it's more than a feast for buffs—anyone who has ever hated dream sequences, for instance, should come away happy.—*A.L.* (Museum of Modern Art; Aug. 20-21.)

Marcello Mastroianni: I Remember (1997)—A beguiling memoir. The style is discursive, not dramatic, but how better to while away three hours than in the company of the most debonair man in movie history? His remembrances of fifty years of filmmaking are so relaxed and insightful that they seem to engage you in a posthumous conversation. Right up to his death, in 1996, Mastroianni masterfully combined emotional transparency and wit. The attitude he describes here is one of humane irony—toward his work and toward himself. Mastroianni merged with his roles but rarely lost the aesthetic distance he needed to shape (and have fun with) his characters. He is acutely perceptive, both about undervalued directors like Germi, Petri, and Monicelli and about giants like De Sica and Fellini; he says that Fellini's improvisations of entire worlds caused even the Maestro's star to feel like a happy spectator. Anna Maria Tatò interviewed Mastroianni and directed the film. In Italian.—*M.S.* (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

Me and My Gal (1932)—Joan Bennett is lively as a wisecracking, gum-chewing waitress; Spencer Tracy is her policeman boyfriend. The Irish humor is spread on thick, but every once in a while Arthur Kober, who did the script, gets off a good one. The melodramatic plot revolves around Bennett's brunette sister (Marion Burns), who is in love with a gangster. Raoul Walsh directed this naïve, pasted-together yet rather pleasing picture.—*P.K.* (Film Forum 2; Aug. 31.)

Moonstruck (1987)—A rose-tinted black comedy, with its own special lushness. Cher is devastatingly funny and sinuous and beautiful as a widowed bookkeeper who lives with her Italian-American family in a big old brownstone in Brooklyn. When the bookkeeper and her fiancé's brother, a baker (Nicolas Cage), start lusting for one another, a fairy-tale full moon lights up the movie. And when you see that the whole cast of family members are involved in libidinal confusions, the opera-buffa structure can make you feel close to deliriously happy. Cage is a wonderful romantic clown—he can look stupefied while he smolders. Norman Jewison's picture is slender, but it's an original: its mockery is a giddy homage to our desire for grand passion.—*P.K.* (Films on the Piers; Aug. 18 and Aug. 20.)

Quiz Show (1994)—Robert Redford's movie is a speedy, absorbing chronicle of a trivial show-business scandal of the fifties: the rigging of big-money quiz shows. The screenplay, by Paul Attanasio, tries hard to sell some sweeping ideas about the class dynamics of American society, and doesn't quite succeed; the picture's real strength is its witty, vigorous evocation of the fifties media world. Ralph Fiennes, John Turturro, and Rob Morrow have the largest roles, but they're outshone by the supporting players: Paul Scofield, Mira Sorvino, Christopher McDonald, Allan Rich, Hank Azaria, Barry Levinson, and—best of all—David Paymer.—*Terrence Rafferty* (Museum of Modern Art; Aug. 28 and Aug. 30.)

Runaway Bride—A rumpled and eccentric romantic comedy with a fluctuating pulse and more odd corners than a rural junk shop. Julia Roberts is a bolter—a girl unsure of her identity, who keeps running away from men at the altar—and Richard Gere, who has developed a new, becomingly wistful manner, is a sardonic New York newspaper columnist who shows up in Roberts's small Maryland town to turn her story into news. The two are drawn together by self-dissatisfaction and bafflement. Garry Marshall, who directed, takes his time exploring the town, and the movie that results is poky but often charming. With the invaluable Joan Cusack, goofing her way through long scenes of arguing and teasing, as Roberts's best friend. Written by the team of Josann McGibbon and Sara Parriott.—*D.D.* (8/9/99) (Art Greenwich Twin, Astor Plaza, Chelsea West, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema, New York Twin, Orpheum VII, and Union Square.)

Run Lola Run—Lola (Franka Potente), a ferociously willful punk girl with red hair, has twenty minutes to come up with a hundred thousand marks and save her hapless boyfriend, Manni (Moritz Bleibtreu), from the wrath of a big-time Berlin gangster. The writer-director, Tom Tykwer, shows us one version of what happens, and then he gives us two others, each of which takes off from the initial circumstances but has the characters make different decisions along the way, producing different climaxes. The action of the movie is rush, rush, rush, but the effect is contemplative, almost metaphysical. In German.—*D.D.* (Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, Eastside Playhouse, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

The Sixth Sense—Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Cinema II, Criterion Center, East 86th Street Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, and Village East Cinemas.)

The Thomas Crown Affair—A spirited, entertaining remake of the profoundly unimportant 1968 movie that starred Steve McQueen and Faye Dunaway. In this version, Pierce Brosnan is the bored, man-who-has-everything plutocrat Thomas Crown, who makes off with a famous painting from the Metropolitan Museum of Art; Rene Russo is the insurance investigator who falls in love with him when she's supposed to be turning him over to the police. In a volatile, very naked sex scene, Russo, who has a big humorous face and a paralyzingly direct manner, pours champagne over Brosnan's head and slaps him on the rump. She can't change the actor's resemblance to a luxury item ordered from a catalogue, but at least she musses him up a bit. The movie is expert piffle for grownups, directed with great energy by John McTiernan and written with verve by Leslie Dixon and Kurt Wimmer. Denis Leary plays the unimaginative working-class cop who wants to catch Crown.—*D.D.*

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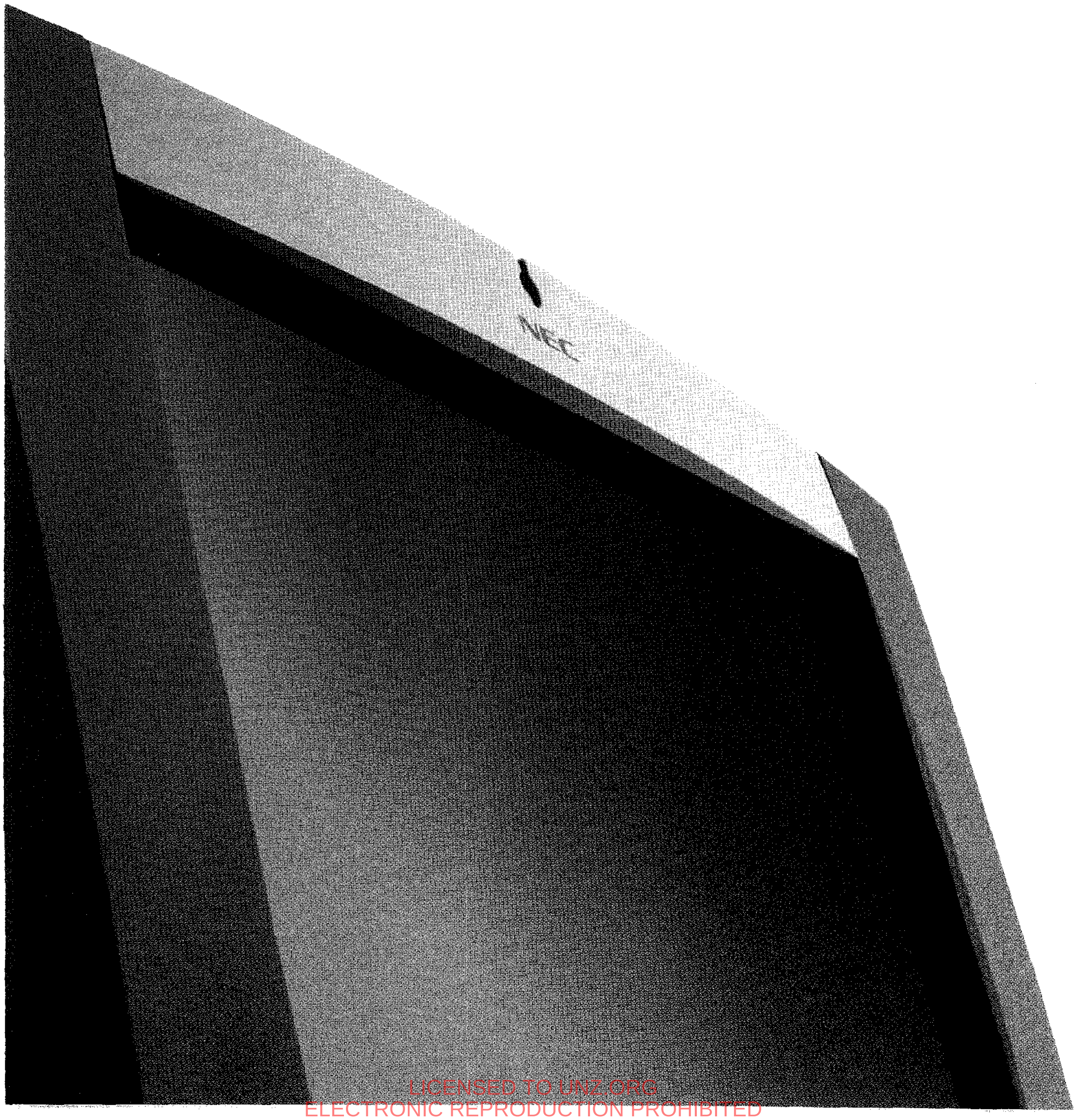
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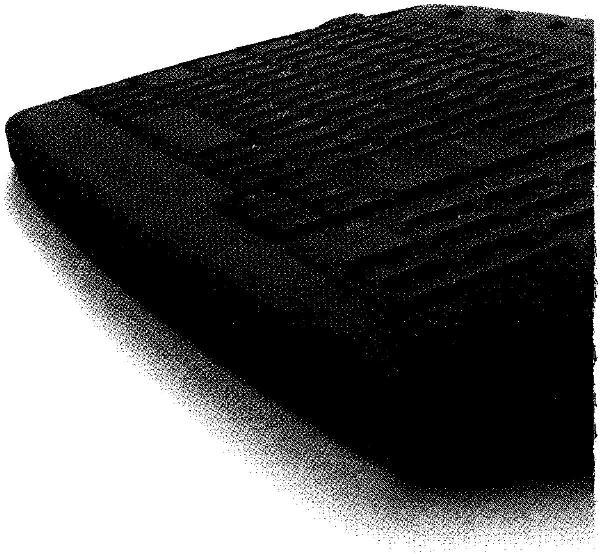

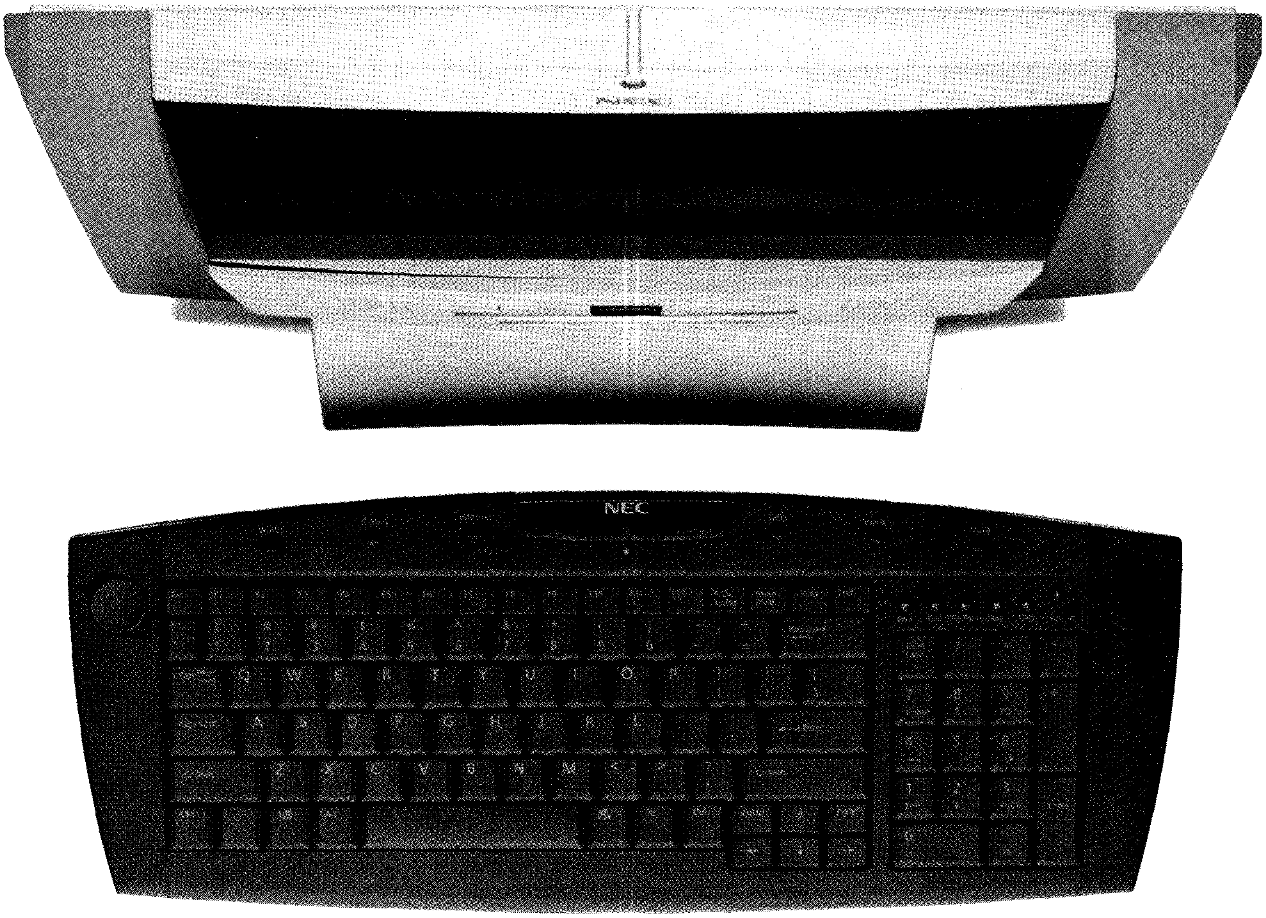
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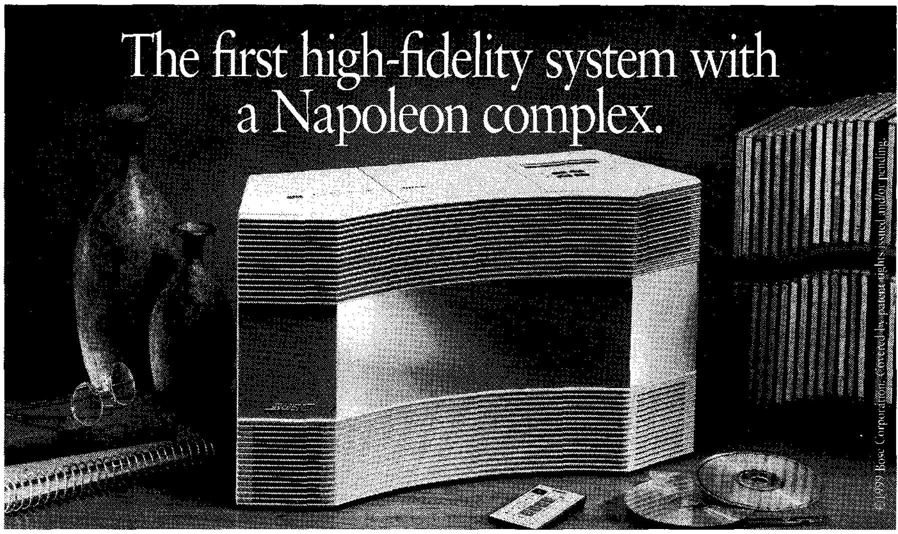
REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

(Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.)

FILM FORUM 2, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—Through Aug. 19: "Cruel Story of Youth" (1960, Nagisa Oshima; in Japanese). . . . ¶ A film series entitled "The Joy of Pre-Code: Sex, Booze & Red Hot Jazz." Aug. 20-21: "Baby Face" (1933, Alfred E. Green) and "Two Seconds" (1932, Mervyn LeRoy). . . . Aug. 22: "Female" (1933, Michael Curtiz) and "Mandalay" (1934, Curtiz). . . . Aug. 23: "The Story of Temple Drake" (1933, Stephen Roberts) and "Search for Beauty" (1934, Erle C. Kenton). . . . Aug. 24: "The Keyhole" (1933, Curtiz) and "Bed of Roses" (1933, Gregory LaCava). . . . Aug. 25: "Lady Killer" (1933, Roy Del Ruth) and "Blonde Crazy" (1931, Del Ruth). . . . Aug. 26: "Virtue" (1932, Edward Buzzell) and "Girls About Town" (1931, George Cukor). . . . Aug. 27-28: "Blonde Venus" (1932, Josef von Sternberg) and "I'm No Angel" (1933, Wesley Ruggles). . . . Aug. 29: "Red Dust" (1932, Victor Fleming) and "Red-Headed Woman" (1932, Jack Conway). . . . Aug. 30: "Her Man" (1930, Tay Garnett) and "Unashamed" (1932, Harry Beaumont). . . . Aug. 31: "Blood Money" (1933, Rowland Brown) and "Me and My Gal" (†).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—A program of films significant to the development of cinema but not currently in the museum's collection. Aug. 19 at 2:30 and Aug. 21 at 5: "Eat Drink Man Woman" (1994, Ang Lee; in Mandarin). . . . Aug. 19 at 6: "Safe" (1995, Todd Haynes). . . . Aug. 19 at 6 and Aug. 22 at 5: "Just Another Girl on the IRT" (1992, Leslie Harris). . . . Aug. 20 at 2:30: "L.A. Confidential" (1997, Curtis Hanson). . . . Aug. 20 at 3: "Sugar Cane Alley" (1983, Euzhan Palcy; in French). . . . Aug. 20 at 6: "The Merry Widow" (1925, Erich von Stroheim; silent). . . . Aug. 20 at 7 and Aug. 28 at 3: "La Région Centrale" (1971, Michael Snow). . . . Aug. 20 at 8:15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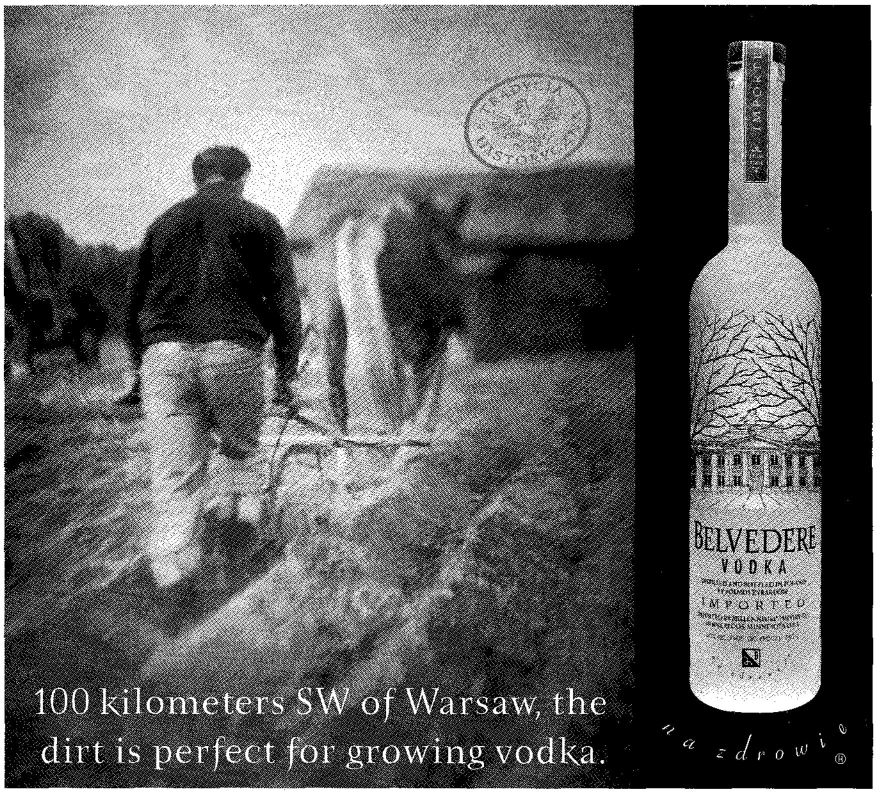
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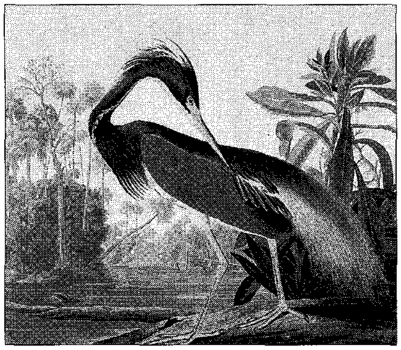

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and Aug. 21 at 2: "Living in Oblivion" (†). . . . Aug. 21 at 2: "Schizopolis" (1996, Steven Soderbergh). . . . Aug. 21 at 5 and Aug. 23 at 6: "To Sleep with Anger" (1990, Charles Burnett). . . . Aug. 22 at 2 and Aug. 23 at 6: "Dear Diary" (1994, Nanni Moretti; in Italian). . . . Aug. 22 at 2: "Microcosmos" (1996, Claude Nuridsany and Marie Perennou). . . . Aug. 22 at 5 and Aug. 23 at 2:30: "The Times of Harvey Milk" (1984, Robert Epstein). . . . Aug. 24 at 2 and Aug. 26 at 6: "Face/Off" (1997, John Woo). . . . Aug. 24 at 6 and Aug. 26 at 2:30: "Sweetie" (1989, Jane Campion). . . . Aug. 24 at 6 and Aug. 28 at 1:30: "I Know Where I'm Going" (†). . . . Aug. 26 at 6 and Aug. 27 at 3: "Dadetown" (1995, Russ Hexter). . . . Aug. 27 at 2:30 and Aug. 31 at 6: "The Spider's Stratagem" (1970, Bernardo Bertolucci; in Italian). . . . Aug. 27 at 6:30 and Aug. 29 at 4: "Ulysses' Gaze" (1995, Theo Angelopoulos; in English and Balkan dialogue). . . . Aug. 27 at 7 and Aug. 29 at 3: "Jeanne Dielman, 23, Quai du Commerce, 1080, Bruxelles" (1975, Chantal Akerman; in French). . . . Aug. 28 at 2 and Aug. 30 at 6: "Quiz Show" (†). . . . Aug. 28 at 5 and Aug. 30 at 2:30: "Bye Bye Birdie" (1963, George Sidney). . . . Aug. 29 at 2 and Aug. 31 at 2:30: "Bhaji on the Beach" (†).

WALTER READE THEATRE, Lincoln Center (875-5600)—Aug. 18-19 at 1 and 8:30: "Les Bonnes Femmes" (1960, Claude Chabrol; in French). . . . ¶ Recent films from Latin America; *in Spanish, with English subtitles.* Aug. 20 at 1 and 5:30, Aug. 21 at 4, and Aug. 22 at 8:30: "Winterland" (Gregorio Cramer; Argentina and France). . . . Aug. 20 at 3, Aug. 21 at 6, Aug. 22 at 6:15, and Aug. 23 at 3:30 and 8:30: "Life Is to Whistle" (Fernando Pérez; Cuba). . . . Aug. 21 at 8:30, Aug. 22 at 4, and Aug. 23 at 1 and 6:15: "Divine" (Arturo Ripstein; Mexico, Argentina, and Spain). . . . Aug. 25 at 1 and 6:15 and Aug. 26 at 1 and 9: "The Day Silence Died" (Paolo Agazzi; Bolivia). . . . Aug. 25 at 3:15 and 8:30 and Aug. 26 at 3:15: "Heroes of the Other Fatherland" (Iván Dariel Ortíz; Puerto Rico). . . . Aug. 27 at 1 and 6, Aug. 28 at 6:40, and Aug. 29 at 4: "Gringuito" (Sergio Castilla; Chile). . . . Aug. 27 at 3:15 and 8:30 and Aug. 28 at 4: "Under the Spell" (Carlos Carrera; Mexico). . . . Aug. 28 at 9, Aug. 29 at 6:30, Aug. 30 at 3:15 and 7:45, and Aug. 31 at 1: "Silvia Prieto" (Martín Rejtman; Argentina). . . . Aug. 29 at 8:45, Aug. 30 at 1 and 5:30, and Aug. 31 at 3: "Fiber Optics" (Francisco Athié; Mexico). . . . ¶ Aug. 21-22 at 2: "Tarantula" (1955, Jack Arnold). . . . ¶ Aug. 28-29 at 2: "Antz" (1998, Eric Darnell and Tim Johnson).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-623-2770)—A program of films directed by François Truffaut; in French, with English subtitles. Aug. 18: "Small Change" (1976). . . . Aug. 19: "The Bride Wore Black" (1968). . . . Aug. 20: "The Man Who Loved Women" (1977). . . . Aug. 21: "Day for Night" (1976). . . . Aug. 22: "Confidentially Yours" (1983). . . . ¶ Aug. 23: "Lone Star" (1996, John Sayles). . . . ¶ Aug. 24: "The Barefoot Contessa" (1954, Joseph L. Mankiewicz). . . . ¶ Aug. 25-26: "Mandabi" (1968, Ousmane Sembène; in Wolof). . . . ¶ Aug. 27: "Top Hat" (1935, Mark Sandrich). . . . ¶ Aug. 28-29: "Stalker" (1979, Andrei Tarkovsky; in Russian). . . . ¶ Aug. 30: "Men with Guns" (1997, Sayles; in Spanish, English, Nahauti, Tzotzil, Maya, and Kuna). . . . ¶ Aug. 31: "The Blue Dahlia" (1946, George Marshall).

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—A program of Sergio Leone films. Aug. 21 at 2: "Once Upon a Time in the West" (1969). . . . Aug. 21 at 5:30: "A Fistful of Dollars" (1964). . . . Aug. 22 at 2: "For a Few Dollars More" (1965). . . . Aug. 22 and Aug. 28 at 4:30: "The Good, the Bad and the Ugly" (†). . . . Aug. 28 at 2: "The Colossus of Rhodes" (1961). . . . Aug. 29 at 2: "Once Upon a Time in America" (1984).

BRYANT PARK, Sixth Ave. at 42nd St.—Mondays, starting at dusk: free drive-in-style moviegoing, beginning with coming attractions, *trailers, and cartoons.* The feature on Aug. 23 will be "The King and I" (1956, Walter Lang). (For rain-date information, call 512-5700.)

A DIFFERENT LIGHT BOOKSTORE, 151 W. 19th St. (989-4850)—A Sunday-night series of free films (and popcorn). On Aug. 22 at 7, the feature will be "Desert Fury" (1947, Lewis Allen); on Aug. 29 at 7, "Gilda" (1946, Charles Vidor).

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES, 32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5110)—A program of films by Wong Kar-wai. Aug. 19 at 7 and 9 and Aug. 21 at 3: "Fallen Angels" (1995). . . . Aug. 20 at 7 and 9 and Aug. 21 at 5: "Happy Together" (1997). . . . Aug. 21 at 7 and 9:15 and Aug. 22 at 6 and 8:15: "Chungking Express" (1994). . . . ¶ Aug. 19 at 8, Aug. 20 at 8 and 9:30, Aug. 21-22 at 4 and 5:30, Aug. 27 at 7:30, and Aug. 28-29 at 4 and 5:30: "A Time to Dance: The Life and Work of Norma Canner" (1999, Ian Brownell and Webb Wilcoxon).

FILMS ON THE PIERS—Films made in New York City are being shown (free, with free popcorn) on two of the city piers. "Moonstruck" (†): Aug. 18 at 8:30 on Pier 54 (at 13th Street) and Aug. 20 at 8:30 on Pier 25 (at North Moore Street). (There are no rain dates.)

THEATRE ADDRESSES

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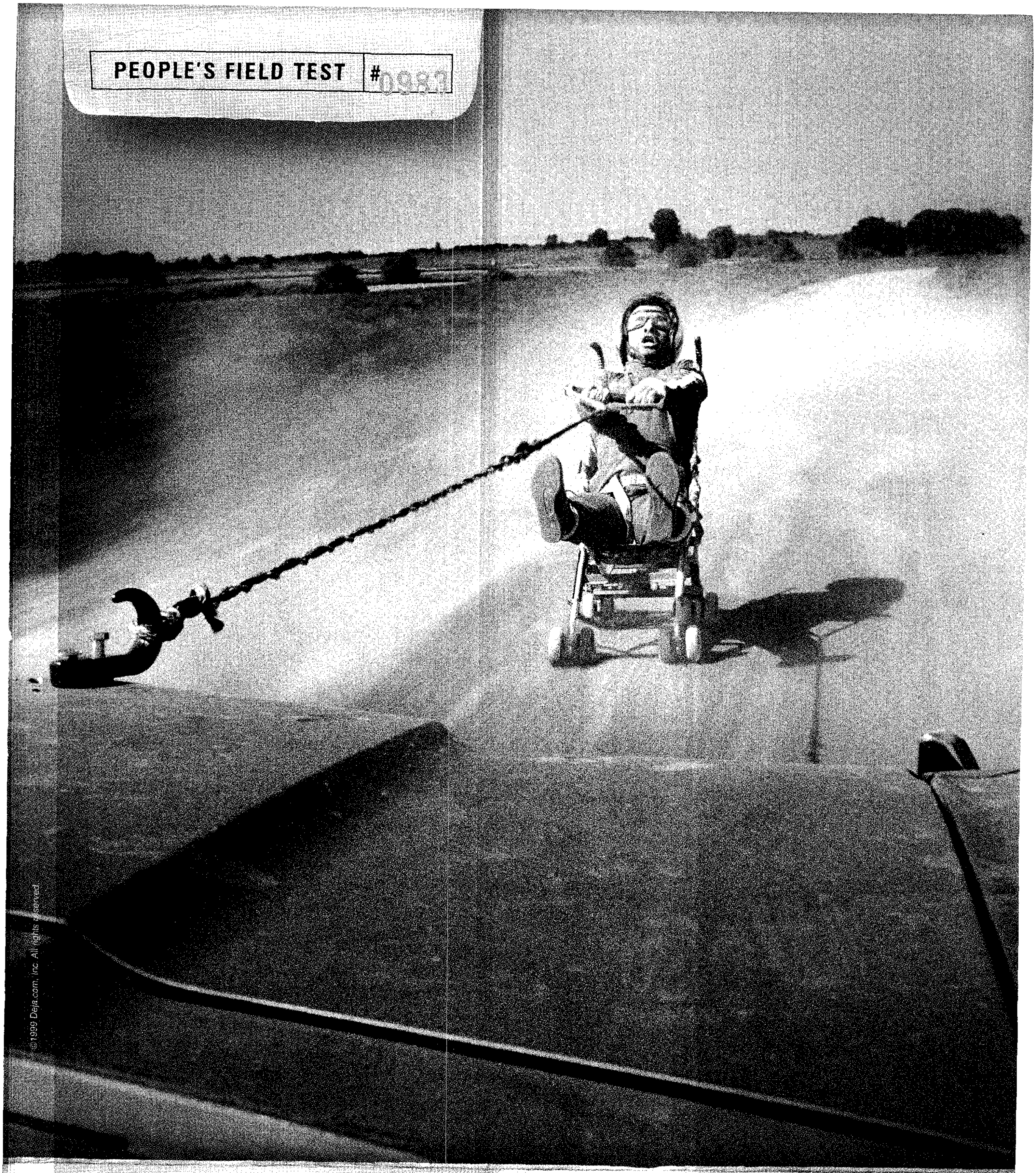
(For show times, call 777-FILM, except where noted.)

ANGELIKA FILM CENTER, 18 W. Houston St.
ART GREENWICH TWIN, Greenwich Ave. at 12th St.
ASTOR PLAZA, 44th St. at Broadway.
BAM ROSE CINEMAS, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-623-2770).
BEEKMAN, Second Ave. at 66th St.
CHELSEA CINEMAS, 260 W. 23rd St.
CHELSEA WEST, 333 W. 23rd St.
CINEMA I, Third Ave. at 60th St.
CINEMA II, Third Ave. at 60th St.
CINEMA 3RD AVENUE, Third Ave. at 60th St.
CINEMA VILLAGE, 22 E. 12th St. (924-3363).
CORONET CINEMAS, Third Ave. at 59th St.
CRITERION CENTER, Broadway at 44th St.
EAST 85TH STREET, First Ave. at 85th St.
EAST 86TH STREET CINEMAS, Third Ave. at 86th St.
EASTSIDE PLAYHOUSE, Third Ave. at 55th St.
84TH STREET SIXPLEX, Broadway at 84th St.
59TH STREET EAST CINEMA, 239 E. 59th St.
FILM FORUM, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
FIRST & 62ND CINEMAS, 400 E. 62nd St.
GOTHAM CINEMA, Third Ave. at 58th St.
GUILD, 33 W. 50th St.
KIPS BAY THEATRE, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
LINCOLN PLAZA CINEMAS, Broadway at 63rd St.
LINCOLN SQUARE, Broadway at 68th St.
METRO CINEMA 1 AND 2, Broadway at 99th St.
MURRAY HILL CINEMAS, 160 E. 34th St.
NEW YORK TWIN, Second Ave. at 67th St.
19TH STREET EAST 6, Broadway at 19th St.
OLYMPIA I AND II, Broadway at 107th St.
ORPHEUM VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
PARIS, 4 W. 58th St. (688-3800).
PARK & 86TH STREET CINEMAS, 125 E. 86th St.
QUAD CINEMA, 34 W. 13th St.
THE SCREENING ROOM, 54 Varick St. *(334-2100).*
62ND & BROADWAY, 62 W. 62nd St.
64TH AND 2ND, Second Ave. at 64th St.
72ND STREET EAST, Third Ave. at 71st St.
STATE, Broadway at 45th St.
SUTTON 1 AND 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
34TH STREET SHOWPLACE, 238 E. 34th St.
UNION SQUARE, Broadway at 13th St.
VILLAGE EAST CINEMAS, Second Ave. at 12th St.
VILLAGE THEATRE VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
WAVERLY 1 AND 2, Sixth Ave. at 3rd St.
WORLDWIDE CINEMAS, 50th St. between Eighth and Ninth Aves.
ZIEGFELD, 141 W. 54th St.



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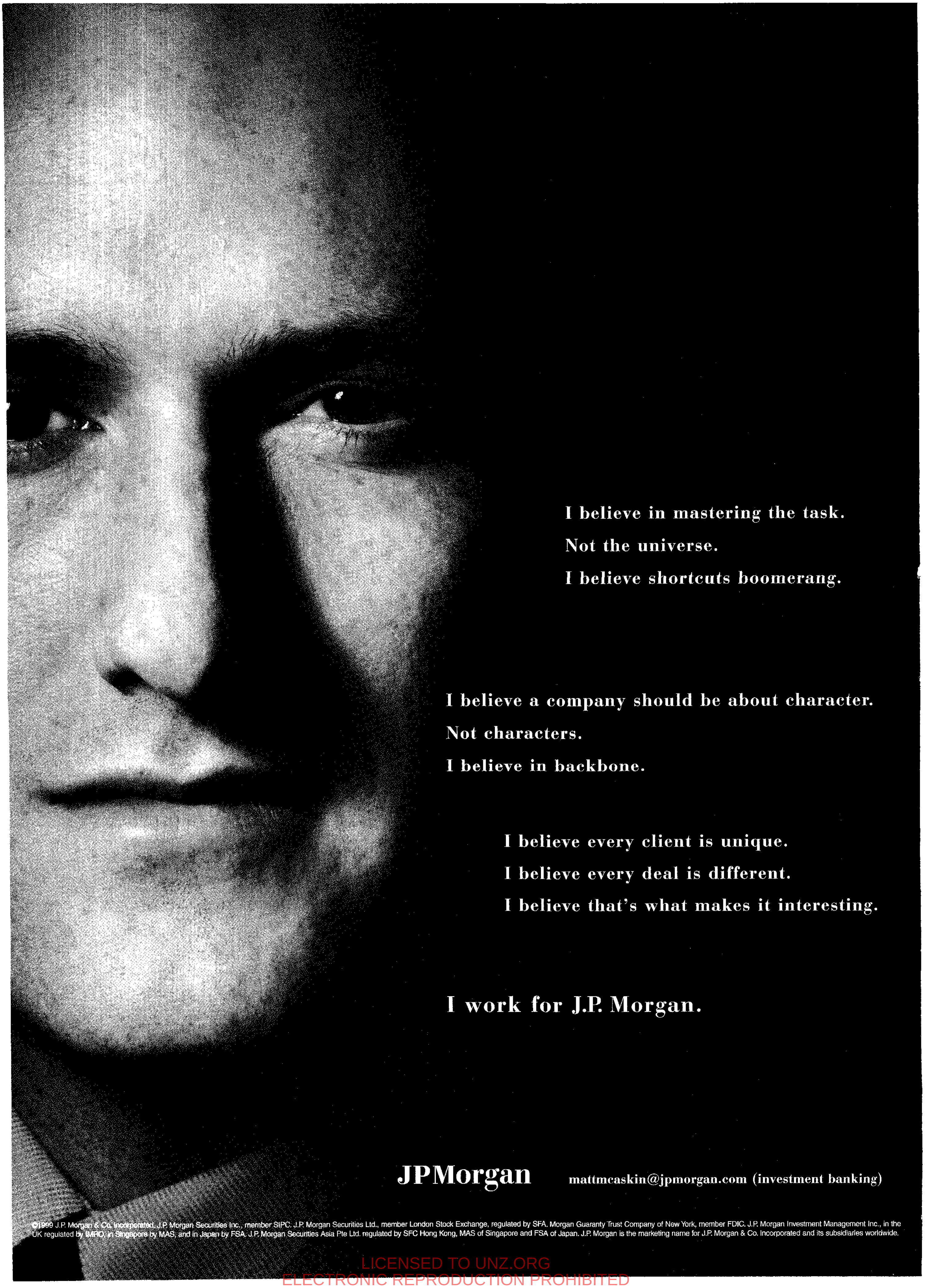

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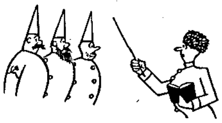
THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT

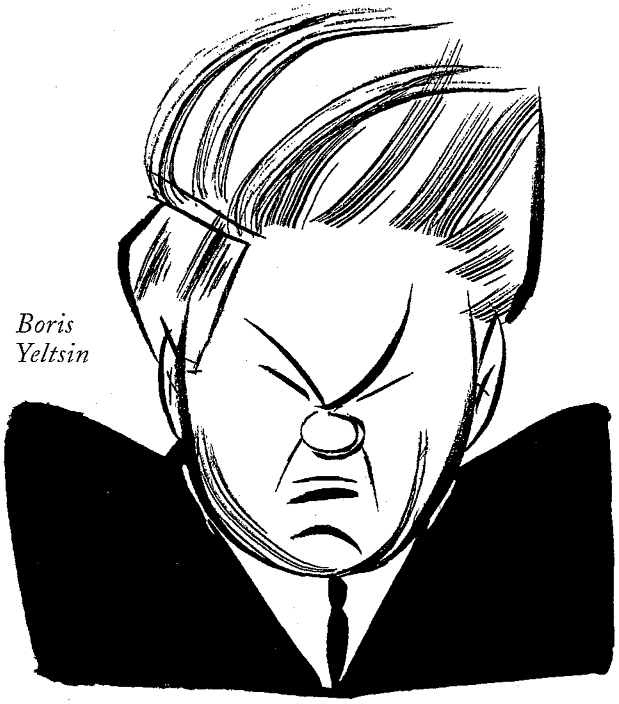
Yeltsin strikes again.



THERE was a run of bad news out of Russia last week: cholera appeared in Siberia, and officials there could only close the borders and pray; energy workers in the far east, desperate for wages that nobody intends to pay them, have entered the second week of a hunger strike; a plague of locusts laid eggs over millions of acres of central Russia's finest farmlands; and, in an eerie echo of the country's most recent sustained catastrophe, a thousand of the most successful Islamic guerrillas in the world stormed across the Chechen border into Dagestan, declared a holy war, and are battling the Russian Army for control of the province.

So it seems understandable that when Boris Yeltsin, the autocratic and aggressively incomprehensible Russian President, fired his Prime Minister and dissolved the government last Monday it didn't really matter to most Russians. Everybody gasped, the ruble plunged for a couple of hours, and then it edged back a bit and people returned to whatever they were doing. Why should anybody be shocked? The State Department spokesman, James Rubin, who issued the standard American statement of support for Yeltsin on such occasions, was right when he said, "It is the prerogative of the President to choose the Premier." What he didn't say is that firing Prime Ministers is about all that Yeltsin is capable of these days. He does it for the simplest and scariest of reasons: because he can.

Yeltsin has just named his fifth Prime Minister in the past seventeen months (and that's not counting his unconstitutional attempt to appoint himself to the job in 1998). It's hard not to laugh, but what's happening in the Kremlin is unbearably sad. Ever since he dropped the first of thousands of bombs on Chechnya, in 1994, Boris Yeltsin has moved steadily toward gutting the democracy he so heroically helped to build in 1991. There was a time when being endorsed by, supported by, or even seen with Yeltsin would have been a great honor for almost any Russian. Even in 1996, amid the secret heart attacks and astonishing bribery of his Presidential campaign, when he hinted that the maverick general Aleksandr Lebed was the man he wanted to succeed him, Russians were impressed with his self-confidence.



Boris Yeltsin

Yeltsin's early Prime Ministers cared mostly about economics, but the experiment with reform has ended, and the last three premiers have been from another world completely: Yevgeny Primakov, Sergei Stepashin, and now Vladimir Putin are true sons of the K.G.B. They were hired to marshal power and to make sure that it stayed in the grasping hands of their boss.

The main reason for the latest change, after only eighty-two days, is already clear: Stepashin proved incapable of containing Yuri Luzkhov, the populist brute who is the mayor of Moscow and the man most likely to take Yeltsin's job in next year's elections. That is, if there are elections. Yeltsin said on Monday that there would be a vote for a new President next summer, and for the first time he named the man he wants to follow him: Putin, who has never held elective office and has no political power base. But the Kremlin is already positioning the new appointee as a latter-day Yuri Andropov, who was the most brutally effective of the old Communist disciplinarians. Putin quickly started speaking in classic Soviet phrases about "fulfilling" the President's orders and "achieving" his goals. In his first speech, he attempted to put the nation at ease by asserting that there was "no basis" for a state of emergency or for cancelling elections. Comforting—but not exactly true.

The "basis" for such an emergency is actually working its way across the Caucasian highlands toward the Caspian Sea. The Muslim spiritual

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

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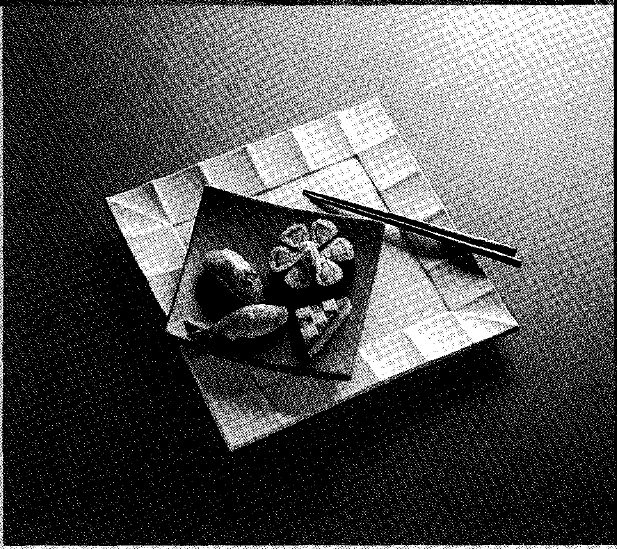

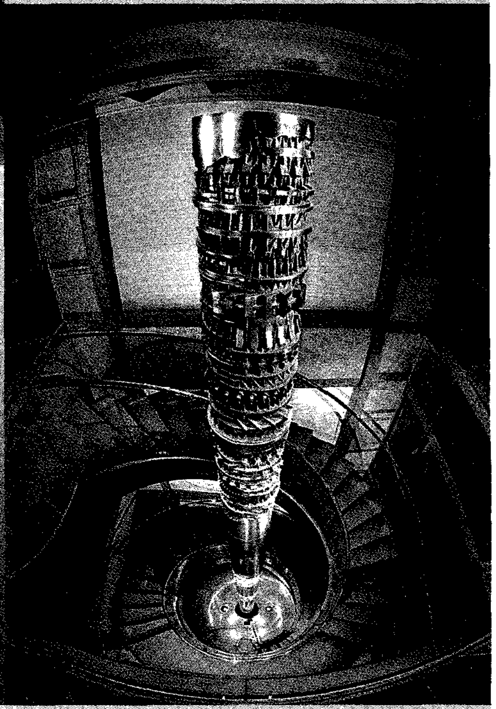

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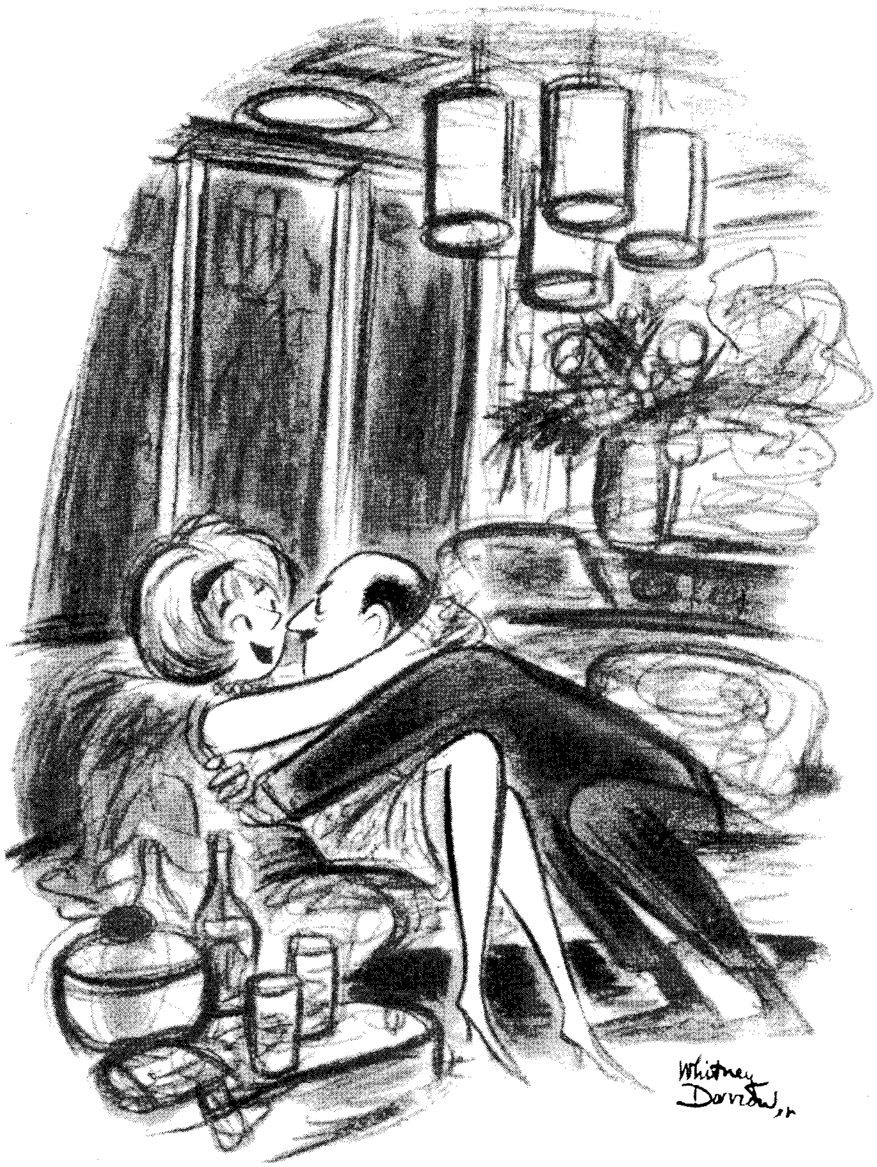


"Explain to me again about the residuals."

WHITNEY DARROW, JR. 5/12/62

• •

WHITNEY DARROW, JR., *who died last week, just shy of his ninetieth birthday, was one of* The New Yorker's *most prolific artists. Darrow's first cartoon was published in the issue of March 18, 1933, and, during the next forty-nine years, he produced more than fifteen hundred drawings, each as elegant and witty as the man himself. There's almost no subject he didn't gently skewer, but he consistently returned to arbitrating the ongoing negotiations between the sexes, most often represented by a black-tied sugar daddy and a wide-eyed mistress.*

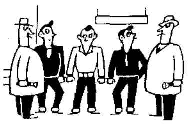
leaders of Dagestan are not yet as radical or as bloodthirsty as their counterparts in Chechnya. But the fighters are led by Shamil Basayev, the Chechen commander whose gift for humiliating Russia is almost equal to that of his nineteenth-century namesake, the warrior Imam Shamil. Moscow has responded just as it did when the Chechen war began, in 1994; officials call the separatists "bandits" and claim that the situation will soon calm down. The Interior Ministry, which controls internal security in Russia, has taken to summoning correspondents and showing them an elaborate snuff film that features various hostages in Chechnya being beaten, stabbed, tortured, and killed. One scene shows an American, released last month, having his finger cut off. It is far from the most grisly episode on the tape.

About all this Boris Yeltsin has absolutely nothing to say. His citizens can be excused their determined indifference. Their government is in the hands of a man whom only the crazy could understand. As another former favorite of Yeltsin's, Boris Nemtsov, said of the President's behavior last week, "It is hard to explain madness."

—MICHAEL SPECTER

ADVANCES IN ADVERTISING

Corporate bigwigs go undercover in the name of cool.



WE live in progressive times. It's O.K. to wear white after Labor Day, khakis are just fine for the office, and, of course, when you're in doubt there's always basic black. In some parts of the outer boroughs, however, dress codes aren't quite so relaxed, which is why Glen Caplin and John Eckstein, Jr., the co-founders of Don't Think Twice Promotion and Marketing, make sure they send out a short memo regarding attire before taking their corporate clients across any bridges. An excerpt: "Do not wear the following: suits, ties, or any other dress apparel!!!!; tight jeans; Docksiders or any other boat shoes; expensive dress shoes; pink polo shirts; long overcoats (looks like a cop); expensive jewelry. . . . If someone is dressed in a way that is a problem, we may want to buy them something hip to cover them up."

Caplin and Eckstein, who are both twenty-seven and former roommates at Syracuse University, are specialists in the field of "street marketing." Sometimes called "guerrilla marketing," and sometimes called putting up posters and handing out free T-shirts, it is most often directed at urban youths; that is, the usually darker-skinned consumers who often dictate the tastes of legions of would-be hip, usually lighter-skinned, suburban consumers. Caplin and Eckstein have

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been particularly successful with a technique known as an "immersion," which involves giving a group of executives a guided, interactive tour of what Caplin and Eckstein pridefully call "the hood."

The itinerary on one such tour, on which they accompanied six Detroit-based executives of the Ford Motor Company, began with a 7 A.M. visit to Westinghouse High School, in downtown Brooklyn; moved on to a hip-hop clothing store, a high-end car-stereo retailer, and a round of meetings with marketing experts at urban music and fashion companies; and ended on the other side of town with a stroll down Fordham Road, the Bronx's main see-and-be-seen drag. "Everywhere we go, we bring boxes of free CDs to give to kids, sort of as bait for them to come over and talk to the executives," Caplin said recently, sitting in his cluttered Manhattan apartment, which serves as half of Don't Think Twice's office space (the other half being Eckstein's cluttered Manhattan apartment). "We ask them to tell us what brands they think are hot and why. And on Fordham Road the Ford guys can see all the kids' rides."

Of course, weeks before any of this happens, the aforementioned fashion memo is distributed. "It's important that the group blend in as much as possible," Caplin said. "We don't want the kids goofing on the clients." To further diffuse any possible misunderstandings, he begins each immersion by giving his executive charges some important tips. "You have to hit them with some simple slang words they need to know," he explained. "*Whack*, *dope*, *fly*, *blazin'*"—that's bad, good, good, and good, respectively. "Then you have to tell them that when people ask if they are Five-O, DT, or TNT"—that is, a police officer, a police detective, or a tactical-narcotics detective—"the answer is no."

Caplin admitted that some executives are taken aback at first by the immersion experience. "But, without fail, they all end up really getting into it, talking to the kids, even using some slang," he said. After Ford's first immersion, last March, the company scheduled two more sessions. Recently, Caplin learned that Ford's C.E.O., Jacques Nasser, was interested in flying in for the day. "We're ready to schedule him anytime," Caplin said, then paused. "As long as he's cool with not wearing shiny shoes and a blazer."

—Zev Borow

POSTCARD FROM ENGLAND

How darkness lit up the British.

Last week, at the eleventh minute of the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of August, the shadow of the moon hit Europe at a little over fifteen hundred miles an hour. Total eclipses of the sun are infrequent enough, but this one was unusually sociable; it passed over some of the most densely populated land in the world. The trick was to experience totality without the use of a banned substance; as three hundred million of us learned on Wednesday, totality is what happens when the moon puts a blocking move on the sun, resulting in a corona of light around the lunar rim and a deep, prehuman urge to wear pajamas. The first place to be was Cornwall, on the outstretched foot of England; the last, two hours later, was the Bay of Bengal, at dusk. In between, the light went out all over Europe—in Le Havre, Munich, Salzburg, Bucharest—before the show moved on to Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan. All in all, it gave astronomers the chance to spend two very special minutes with a star, and earth-watchers the chance to measure discrepancies in national freakout. In the Indian city of Kurukshetra, people bathed in holy lakes; in Romania, they burned a giant cross to ward off the evil spirits and personal-injury lawyers who are said to walk the earth during an eclipse; in France, they hired Jessye Norman to sing, with much the same effect. In England, they talked about the weather.

It was the first total eclipse that the country had witnessed in seventy-two years, and the English prepared for this mystical occurrence with an outbreak of traditional festivities, including health scares and traffic jams. Six hundred thousand enthusiasts crowded into Cornwall and saw almost nothing at all, because there were clouds in the way. Nevertheless, the world did go black at the appointed time, and everyone appeared mildly stunned by the strangeness of the occasion. Thanks to its Arthurian connections, Cornwall has long been a magnet for pagans, Druids, and other followers of unorthodox or nonexistent faiths, but now even hardy souls with families and flasks of coffee looked ready to strip off their windbreakers, don snow-white robes, and make love on a stone altar. The next English eclipse is not expected for another ninety-one years; all things considered, this is probably a good thing.

Farther along the coast, the climate was kinder. Near Rye, the town in the southeast where Henry James spent the last eighteen years of his life, is a beach called Camber Sands. It is a shabby heaven, unchanged in decades; the ice cream tastes of nothing, the only exercise is trampolining or mini-golf, and the man selling shovels and pails plays early Elvis at ten o'clock in the morning. On Wednesday, it became clear that to be in possession of a pair of fogged, eclipse-viewing spectacles gave you an alarming prerogative: you could

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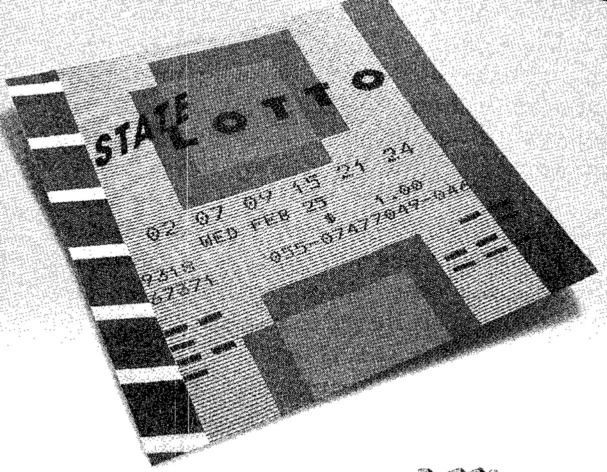

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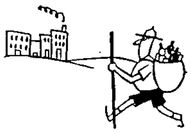
approach complete strangers and engage them in conversation, a form of contact that most Englishmen require weeks to achieve. Thus equipped, stargazers could admire the action overhead: the moon taking a neat chunk out of the top right-hand corner of the sun, as if biting into an apple; the sun gradually dwindling to a low-slung, vanilla crescent, so that it began confusingly to resemble a nocturnal moon; finally, a nail paring of brightness, unbothered by cloud. We were not on the line of totality, but the coverage was close to ninety-eight per cent, and you felt the effect. The air took on a quick chill, and the light grew weak and crepuscular. Seagulls flocked together, settled on the waves, and called it a day. The flap and cackle of beach sounds was stilled to silence, broken solely by the distant cry of a cell phone.

Eclipses, in short, are even weirder than their reputation suggests. Beyond the allure of their brevity (the longest period of totality, in south-central Romania, was just under two and a half minutes), they remain impossible to grasp; you scrabble for other sensations of which they half remind you. Camber Sands, for example, seemed to have been fitted with a Day for Night—the filter that movie directors attach to the camera lens for instant gloom, and that is charmingly known to the French as a *Nuit Américaine*. This cheeriest of locations suddenly felt like the setting for a ghost story, and, indeed, reporting on an eclipse is like claiming that you have been haunted. Even if other people believe you, they're not particularly interested. But you will insist, to your dying day, that you know what you saw in the dark.

—ANTHONY LANE

THE WAYWARD PRESS

The National Geographic Society goes where plenty have gone before.



A RIOT of bold type—"AMERICA'S WILD EDGE," "FORBIDDEN TIBET," and the like—tramples the cover of the première issue of *Adventure*, a sumptuous new quarterly travel magazine published by the National Geographic Society. But the magazine opens to reveal the full cover photograph in all its unobscured, horizontal glory. It is a magnificent panorama of the badlands of Utah—a vast expanse of rugged, rust-colored hills, casting sharp shadows under a huge azure sky. From a cliff on the right side of the picture a stone spar juts out like a dinosaur's tooth; clinging to the spar, surveying the terrain, is a speck of a man in hiking clothes. One intrepid human being and the pristine, empty wilderness—that's the message, apparently.

But when you examine the picture closely you begin to wonder just how untamed the wilderness really is. A dirt road is faintly visible, its double track summoning images of tires and gasoline. Then you notice a diagonal scar cutting rudely across the corrugated hills. Although the scar's interior is hidden, it's pretty obvious that what you're looking at is not a canyon (the cut is too fresh and too straight for that) but a superhighway. You can't see the cars, but you know they're there. Then you begin to wonder about the haze on the horizon. Air pollution, perhaps?

The traditional Lewis and Clark paradigm of adventure—the exploration of unknown territory, conducted of necessity under conditions of extreme hardship—is as obsolete as a three-hundred-baud modem. The blank spots on the maps have been filled in. There are very few places, however remote or inhospitable, that cannot be reached in a day's time, given the means to charter the right kinds of air, land, or water transportation. The planet is lousy with people and all their works. Such are the awkward facts that *Adventure* (or *National Geographic Adventure*, to give it its full title) is obliged to grapple with.

If *Adventure* were a less scrupulous magazine, it might simply ignore the realities that make its subject problematic. Instead, many of these adventures seem to have a pretty high ratio of deliberately courted—or, at least, not deliberately avoided—inconvenience, boredom, or just plain misery to exhilaration or fun. Judging from the several articles about rock climbing in various exotic locales, scaling cliffs is pretty much the same the world over: harrowing and pointless. An account of sea kayaking off southeastern Baja California is largely given over to descriptions of unnecessary hassles in getting there (the writer and his friends drove for thirty-six hours from Northern California, even though good air connections are available), admissions of mistakes in planning (they brought their own food, though local stores turned out to be well stocked), and complaints about camping mishaps (the wind blew their stuff all to hell during the night and they had to spend half a day collecting it along a half mile of beach). After all that, the obligatory lyrical coda seems a little perfunctory. "Each of the past eight days," the writer concludes, "had given us something: a graceful heron gingerly stepping along tide-emptied sands in search of dinner; a pelican lowering his landing gear just above our heads; starfish of every color; cornet; rockfish; grouper; and rainbow-hued triggerfish." Very nice, but, on balance, might not a day at Sea World followed by dinner at a three-star fish restaurant provide as much pleasure?

The nostril-flaring language of adventure writing, with its treks and quests and odysseys, can create comic contrasts with the realities of modern travel. "The sense I want," writes a man who motored through Big Bend National Park, in Texas,

> is that of the settlers who came here expecting to tame the landscape—that sense of dominating this indomitable land, of cracking its code. They, of course, all ultimately failed . . .
>
> And now I've arrived, buckled into the cockpit of my Jeep, seduced by aluminum air-conditioning into delusions of conquest. But when I stop the truck

—actually, it's a sport-utility vehicle, which is a truck for tax purposes only—

> and get out, the sun hits me in an oppressive wave; the heat asphyxiates. The road lies shimmering like a snake, bright as an overexposed Kodachrome—unchanged by my passing. . . . There is no way to conquer this land. It always reasserts itself.

Until one gets back into the car, that is. Then the air-conditioning reasserts itself. Still, it's not the fault of *Adventure* that adventure isn't what it used to be.

—HENDRIK HERTZBERG

~~Patient Choice~~

If you ignore it, maybe it will go away.

Today, most of us can choose the physicians who will provide our medical care, including, importantly, the surgeon who will perform any operation we may need. It's one way we can ensure that we'll have the best possible result from any medical procedure. But Americans may not have this choice much longer. Change is coming to our nation's health care system, and changes now under consideration could limit your right to consult with the qualified specialist of your choice.

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SHIKSA GODDESS

BY WENDY WASSERSTEIN

I CANNOT tell a lie. Now that Madeleine Albright, Tom Stoppard, and even Hillary Rodham Clinton have embraced their Jewish roots, I feel compelled to bite the bullet and publicly reveal that I've just discovered my own denominational truth. I am Episcopalian.

I should have guessed a long time ago, because my parents never mentioned it. In fact, they hid it. They sent me to primary school at the Yeshiva Flatbush. It never crossed my mind that I was deliberately being isolated. On our classroom walls were portraits of Chaim Weitzman and Golda Meir in place of Dwight and Mamie Eisenhower. Our horror stories were not of being buried by Communists but of being suffocated by nomad ham sandwiches.

We lived in a Jewish neighborhood in Flatbush. Our shopping strip included kosher butchers and Hymie's Highway Appetizers. For Sunday brunch, my mother produced bagels, belly lox, and cream cheese with scallions. Nobody told me that lox lived a double life as smoked salmon, or that herring could ever be kippered.

Even the Christmas holidays were a setup. Every year on Christmas Eve, we were on a jet to Miami Beach. There was not even a chance for us to watch the WPIX Channel 11 Yule log burning as the Mormon Tabernacle Choir sang "Silent Night." We celebrated the holidays front-row center at the Versailles Room, with Myron Cohen warming up our crowd for Sammy Davis, Jr. Even our African-Americans were Jewish!

Until now, I've had a happy life thinking of myself as a Jewish writer. I came to accept that when my work was described as being "too New York" it was really a euphemism for something else. I belonged to a temple, and, on my opening nights, my mother invariably told friends that she'd be much happier if it was my wedding. In other words, I had a solid sense of self. I knew exactly who I was.

Then the bottom fell out. I was speaking at the Lion of Judah Luncheon in Palm Beach recently when I noticed a woman in a Lilly Pulitzer dress, one strand of pearls, and forty-year-old pink Pappagallo shoes leaning against the door. She stood out from the crowd because, instead of the omnipresent Barry Kisselstein Cord purse with lizard clasp, she was carrying a battered lacrosse stick.

At the conclusion of my talk, she approached the podium. "I hope you don't mind my speaking to you, but I believe we are related," she said.

MAYO
HAM
RISKO

I looked at her dead-straight blond hair and smiled politely. "I doubt it."

"Your name translates to Waterston," she continued. "Harry Waterston, your great-uncle twice removed, was my mother's fourth husband. They were married for one month." She looked at me as if only a simpleton wouldn't make the immediate connection.

I did have a distant relative, Dr. Harry Wasserstein, but I never heard of him marrying anyone but Aunt Rivkah. According to my mother, even though Harry was an educated man, he never worked a day in his life, and Rivkah's life was miserable.

"I think you must be mistaken," I said, and tried to excuse myself.

"After he left my mother, Harry Waterston changed his name to Wasserstein because he wanted his son to go to an Ivy League college, and to Mount Sinai Medical School. Harry, Jr., became an educated man, but he never worked a day in his life."

I was *shvitzing*. I mean sweating. "Our name actually translates to Waterstone," I said.

"That's irrelevant!" She was almost haughty. "Look at that actor on 'Law & Order'—what's his name, Sam? He's a Hasid if I ever saw one."

She handed me the lacrosse stick while I made a mental note to find out what Sam Waterston was doing for the High Holy Days. "This was Harry's lacrosse stick, which he used the year he was expelled from Hotchkiss," she said. "He made me promise to give it to the first Wasserstein relative I met in Palm Beach. He said it was inevitable that one of you people would show up here!" She winked and left the room.

Good or bad news had always made me hungry. But for the first time in my life I needed a drink. Maybe she was onto something.

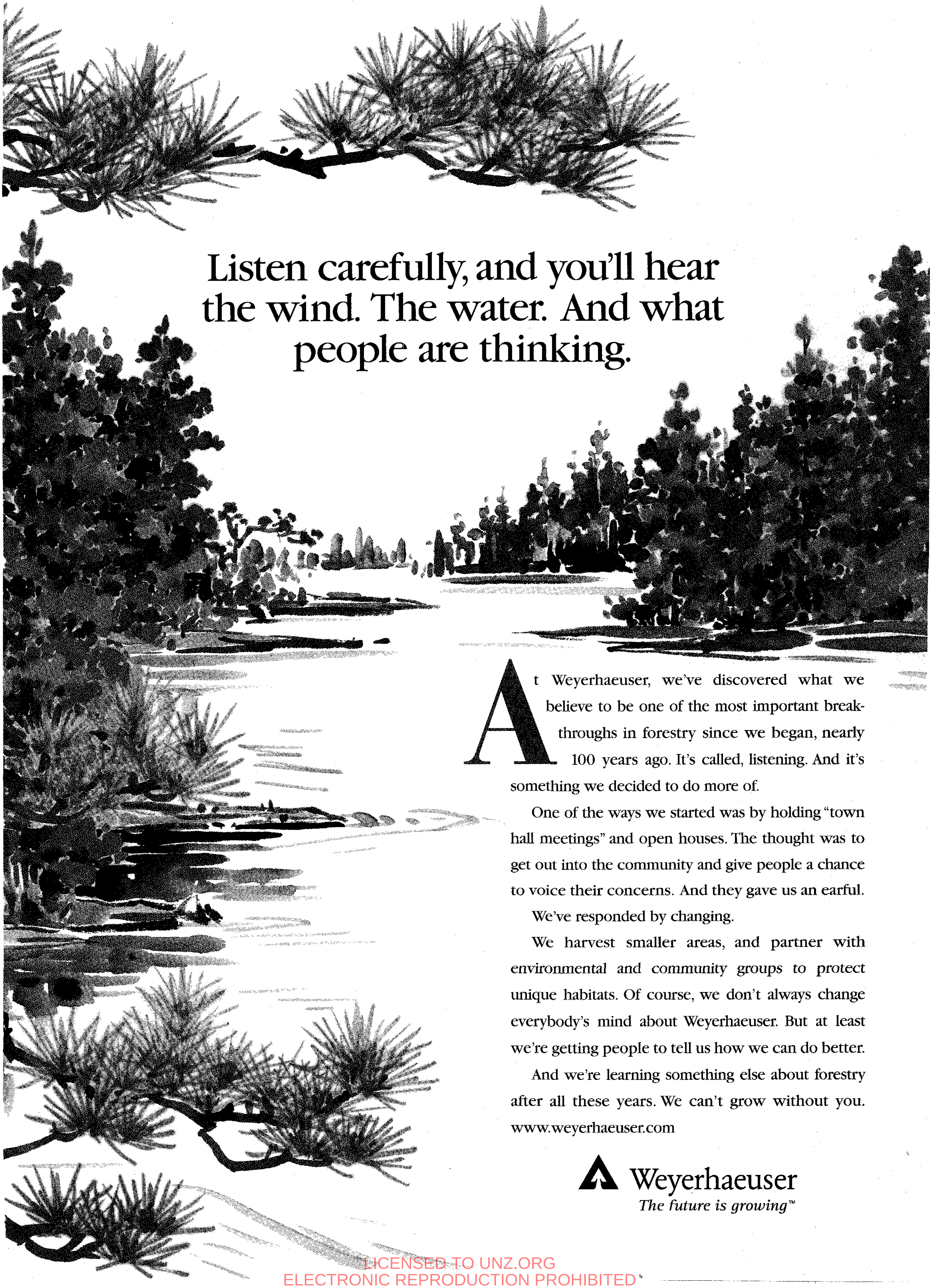
That week, I began eating chicken sandwiches with mayo on white bread, no crust, and getting full after two bites. For the first time in my life, I wrote in to *The Mount Holyoke Quarterly:* "Am looking to buy thirty-year-old Saab car and to apologize to all the Holyoke girls named Timothy and Kikky, whom I never spoke to. I now know you were very interesting people."

I began wearing faded cardigan sweaters and cancelled all appointments for massages, pedicures, and exploratory liposuction. I gave up on my complicated relationship with a married Jewish Malaysian vibes player and learned to enjoy the company of a divorced asexual friend from Amherst who studies pharmaceutical stocks for J. P. Morgan. I began running ten miles every morning and sculling down the Hudson nightly. My approval ratings with my friends have gone up fifteen points.

But I was still, as I used to say in Yiddish, "*nit ahin, nit aher*," or, as I now say in the Queen's English, "neither here nor there."

That was when I decided to go on a listening tour of Fishers Island. I wanted to really hear the stories of my new Wasp ancestors, learn to make their cocktails, and wear their headbands. I want to live up to my true destiny and announce to the world how great it is to be *goyisheh* like me. —WENDY WASSERSTEIN

ROBERT RISKO



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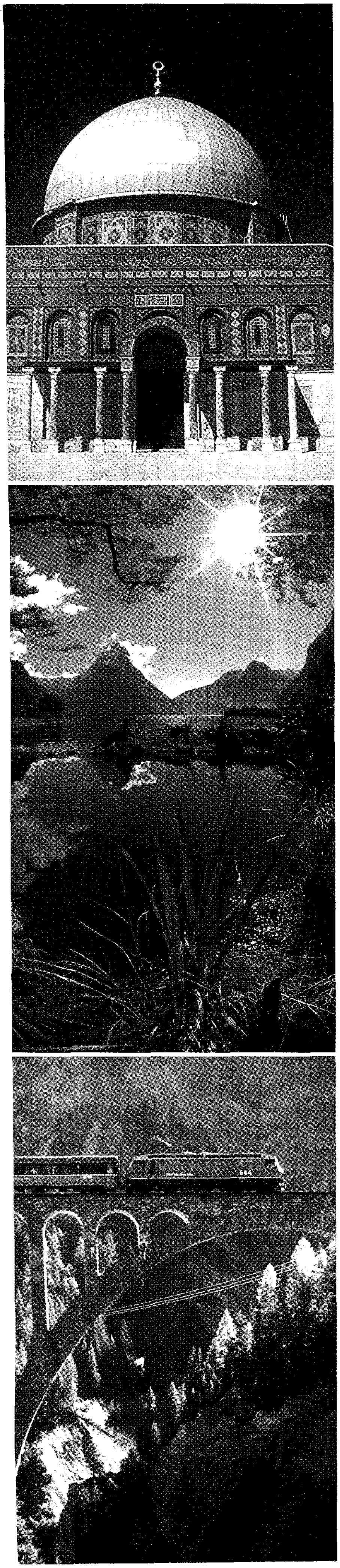

MILLENNIUM TRAVEL ADVISORY

GLOBAL PARTY

I suggested that she take a trip round the world.
'Oh, I know,' returned the lady, yawning with ennui,
'but there's so many other places I want to see first.'
—S. J. Perelman, Westward Ha!

Talk about the mega super-event of our times. A blockbuster of bashes laced with champagne, caviar, and a concatenation of toasts, tears, and tremors. Where will you be on the ultimate New Year's Eve, when the big door swings open on a new era?

For most of us, the moment itself will matter less than the vivid memories of where we were. A resort in Bali? A cruise zigzagging along the international date line? Or maybe just a midnight picnic with a baguette and a bottle of wine in a place we always thought was simply the very best place of all?

"The only way to get rid of a temptation is to yield to it," wrote Oscar Wilde. The millennial temptations are legion and ones that Wilde would likely have endorsed. The grand partying expected to occur on a global scale will decidedly be a cut above what the knights, vassals, and serfs enjoyed in 1000 A.D.

What's on the millennial menu? Choices proliferate—from a Fred Astaire whirl in a magnificent ballroom to mountain biking in Mexico's Sierra Madre. With our current mobility, we can salute the millennium from Nantucket to Nepal. Microsoft tycoon Bill Gates is supposed to be throwing a huge party on Fiji, near the international date line, where the millennium will make its debut. (Just in case you were wondering, it's tiny Pitt Island not Tonga, in the South Pacific, that can claim to be the very first parcel of land to welcome the new era, according to Britain's Royal Geographical Society.)

Sports-minded? Try a hot-air balloon ride in Napa Valley instead of just popping balloons, or white-water rafting on the Colorado instead of just imbibing the bubbly. Such options can bring you closer to nature as the earth rotates into the millennium.

After you've selected a locus for the spectacular event, it's time to make the bookings that will turn your millennial celebration into a fête befitting your lifestyle. Not easy, so don't procrastinate. Unless you commit, your first choice may be gone. Only Times Square can absorb one more body at the last minute—and it will surely be the Big Apple's biggest squeeze.

by Paul Burnham Finney

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ADVENTURE CAPITAL

And speaking of Gotham, Celebration 2000: The Party of the Century expects thirty-thousand revelers at its unprecedented, blue-chip affair (tickets range from $1,000 to $2,500). All four floors of the quarter-mile-long (twenty-two acre) Jacob Javits Convention Center are earmarked for the colossal, twelve-hour, centennial kickoff, which will include three performance areas with internationally known celebrities (Aretha Franklin, Sting, Duke Ellington Orchestra, Joan Rivers, Tom Jones, Enrique Iglesias, Chuck Berry, and Andrea Bocelli, among others). Sumptuous wining and dining will be fussed over by fabled restaurateur Jean-Georges Vongerichten himself (at least for the $2,500 ticket holders). Call Celebration 2000 at 877-332-3119, or visit www.celebration2000.com.

Maxwell House
GOOD TO THE LAST DROP

© Donal F. Holway

PEOPLE GRIDLOCK
One contender for the millennial party of parties award will be Times Square, where the countdown is sure to be thunderous.

The world's biggest blowout, however, is bound to be the free BYO in Times Square where millions are anticipated this year. Hourly live events, simultaneously projected on giant screens, will start at 6 A.M. on December 31st, continue through the midnight countdown as the ball descends, and wind to a close at 6 A.M. on January 1st. Live video images from around the world will mark the arrival of the New Year in each time zone. Visit www.timessquare2000.org for more details.

With Rockefeller Center world-renowned as Gotham's classic holiday centerpiece, why not stay a couple of blocks away at Park Avenue's Art Deco palace, **The Waldorf=Astoria** (800-WALDORF, www.waldorf.com). At the legendary hotel, revelers will dance their way into the millennium with big band swing in the Grand Ballroom, rock and roll in the Astor Room, and Latin rhythms from salsa to rhumba in the Jade Room. And in every corner of the 1931 landmark—Peacock Alley, Bull and Bear, Cocktail Terrace, and Inagiku—there will be champagne flowing amidst a profusion of flowers and gilded decorations. All this should weave magic into the millennium.

And for those steeped in the romance of the past, midtown Manhattan's **Algonquin** (800-555-8000), where the famous Round Table of literary figures (James Thurber and Dorothy Parker among them) used to gather, might also be a fitting entrée to the new era.

ON THE ROAD

Nostalgia buffs will also appreciate The Jefferson in Washington, D.C., built in 1923 (George Bush's family stayed there during his inauguration) or The Brown, a nineteen-twenties landmark in Louisville. Add the historic Martha Washington Inn in Abingdon, Virginia and The Drake Oak Brook outside Chicago, and you have the full complement of distinguished **Camberley Hotels** (800-555-8000, www.camberleyhotels.com).

There's one way to literally ride into the next eon—and it's **Amtrak** (800-872-7245, www.amtrak.com), the national rail network. Roar through the Rockies on the California Zephyr or take the Crescent to New Orleans, the town that knows a good party when it sees one. Amtrak's most scenic rides, by the way, are aboard its Viewliners (east of the Mississippi) and Superliners (west of same), with their panoramic windows and special services. Take the new high-speed Acela Express that will begin operating by year's end, shortcutting the

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*Note to self:
Remember to leave suite at least once a day.

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THROWING A FÊTE

Louisiana is having a yearlong, statewide, grand FrancoFête, celebrating the 300th anniversary of Louis XIV's establishment of a French outpost in what would later become the Louisiana Territory. With over fifteen-hundred festivals and events focused on the state's French traditions, language, cuisine, and music, you'll find that Louisiana has more to show off than New Orleans. The FrancoFête culminates on December 11th with closing ceremonies in the historic parish town of Natchitoches. For a FrancoFête calendar of events, call the Louisiana Office of Tourism at 800-99GUMBO, or visit www.louisianatravel.com.

DOING THE CHARLESTON

Drop in on **Charleston, South Carolina** for the millennium and find yourself transported into an old world ambience of antebellum houses, picturesque inns, hidden gardens, and sweet southern charm. Visit the Aiken-Rhett House that served as the headquarters for confederate general P.G.T. Beauregard; the Old City Market; and the Heyward-Washington House that hosted George Washington in 1791. Glide graciously into the new millennium at The Charleston Place Hotel, laden with antiques; its Charleston Grill has wrought-iron chandeliers and mahogany walls.

Nearby, Kiawah Island, a 10,000-acre golf and tennis resort, has the feel of a great southern coastal plantation. For information, including details on Charleston's "First Night" citywide festival, call the Charleston Area Convention & Visitors Bureau at 800-868-8118, or visit www.charlestoncvb.com.

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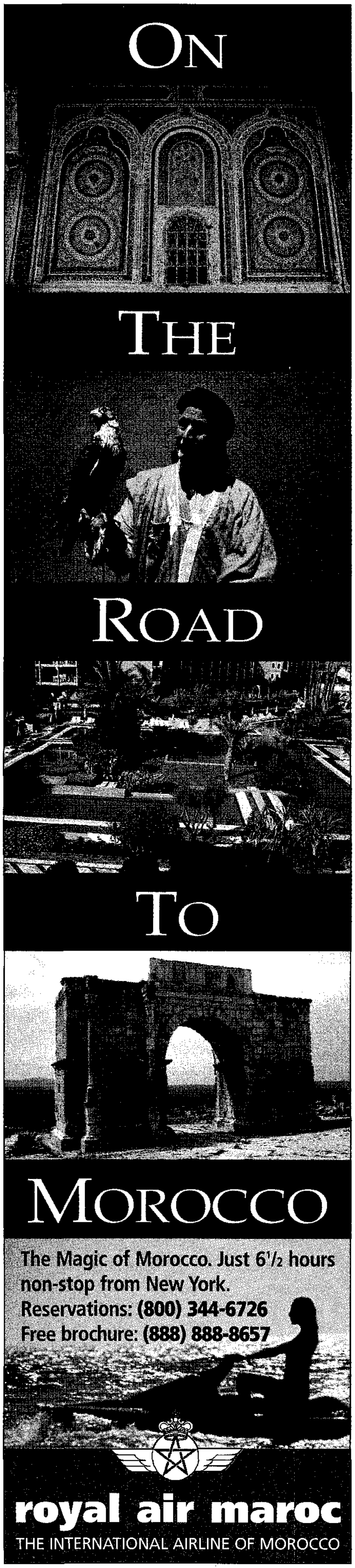

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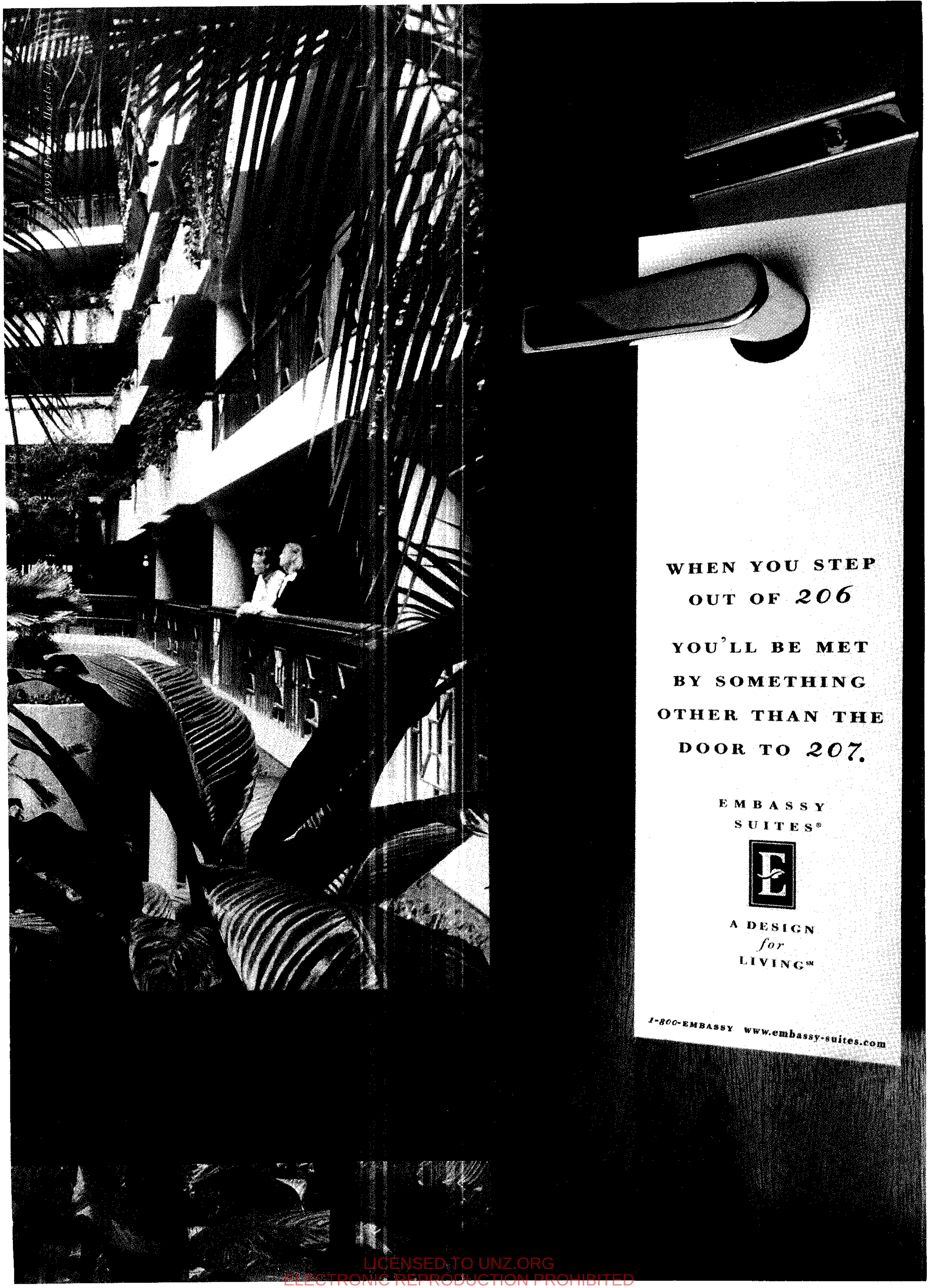
guests salute the millennium in the stained-glass lobby of Denver's **Brown Palace Hotel** (800-321-2599, www.brownpalace.com). The late nineteenth-century renaissance-style edifice of Colorado granite and Arizona sandstone with a Mexican onyx interior has hosted more than a century of celebrities from Teddy Roosevelt to The Beatles to Bill Clinton. Henry C. Brown, who built the hotel in 1892, will be honored at the millennial festivities. Come midnight, 2000, guests will hear the first chiming of a new millennium clock—the hotel's signature griffin is incorporated—designed by noted sculptor Robert Shure. (Shure created the life-sized model of George Washington at the Washington Monument). Those in attendance will receive a signed, limited-edition replica of the clock. On New Year's Day, the staff will prepare a fabulous buffet to help revelers recover.

The new 424-room **Four Seasons Hotel Las Vegas** (800-332-3442, www.fourseasons.com) has all the cushy amenities of the company's other hotels but—surprise—it's perched atop the new, tropical-looking **Mandalay Bay Resort & Casino** on floors thirty-five through thirty-nine. Celebrate the millennium within Four Seasons private confines—it has everything from ballrooms to a grill and café. As you survey the glitzy strip below, you might even be tempted to venture downstairs for some exhilarating casino action.

You can time travel to the exotic Far East—without leaving San Francisco—by staying at the **Radisson Miyako** (800-333-3333, www.radisson.com) at the base of Pacific Heights. Go Japanese with tatami mats, shoji screens, and futons. Even the western-style rooms have deep-soaking tubs. Dine in the YOYO Bistro or Sakura Room overlooking the hotel's Japanese garden and koi fish pond. Dance and toast to a new era as midnight 2000 approaches.

For a luxe millennial experience, you can settle into a **Ritz-Carlton** hotel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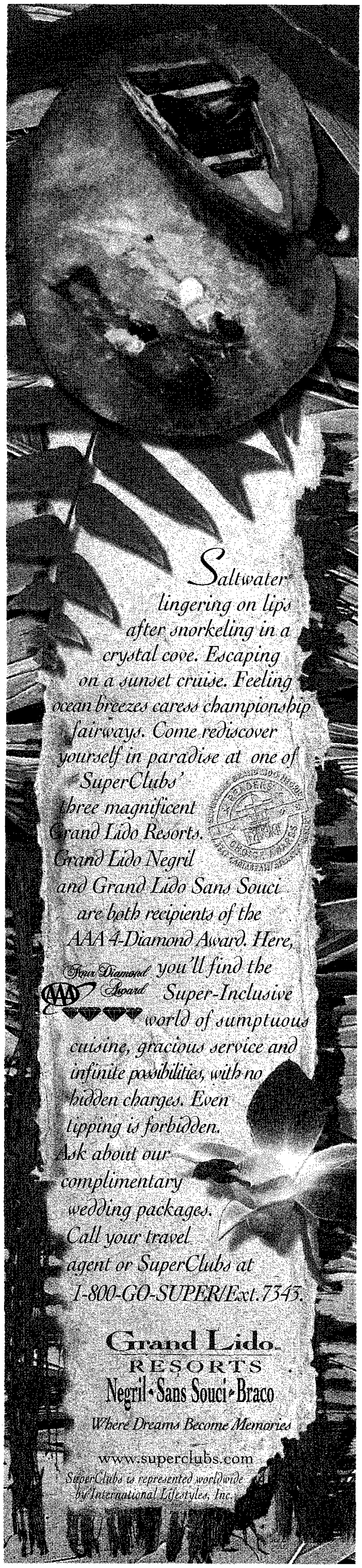
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BORDER CROSSINGS

Ever been to Los Cabos, Mexico's resort area at the tip of Baja California? Near the town of San Jose del Cabo you'll find the romantic, hacienda-style **Palmilla** (800-637-2226, www.palmillaresort.com) overlooking the Sea of Cortés. Built in 1956 by the son of a former Mexican president, it was once accessible only by private plane or yacht and served as a retreat for dignitaries and entertainers. Secluded beaches, water sports, deep-sea fishing, tennis, and two Jack Nicklaus golf courses will make welcoming the millennium—margarita-style—a genuine pleasure.

Canadian Pacific Mountain Resorts (800-441-1414, www.cphotels.com) will begin their countdown to 2000 with horse-drawn sleighs, champagne-laced suppers, and western swing dancing at its two century-old resorts, nestled high in the Canadian Rockies west of Calgary. The Banff Springs Hotel is planning a retrospective celebration with a variety of themed rooms that will usher guests from 1888 to the roaring twenties, to the big band era, to a sixties rock and roll party. Drive a few hours north through spectacular scenery and you can spend millennium night at Canadian Pacific's rustic **Jasper Park Lodge**, which you can use as a base to explore the surrounding mountains.

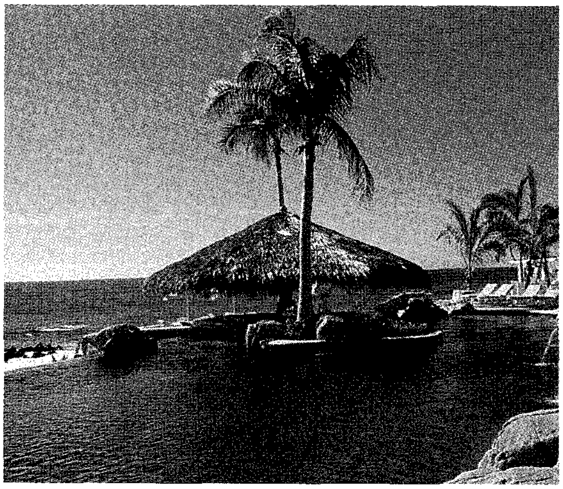
ISLAND IDYLLS

ROYAL TREATMENT

Some seven-hundred miles off the U.S. coast, Bermuda (800-BERMUDA, www.bermudatourism.com) will make its bow to the millennium in proper British style. The oldest British colony still extant is known as much for its genteel sophistication as it is for the warmth of its people. Furthermore, Bermuda has more golf courses per square mile (and shipwreck dives) than any other place in the world.

With Bermuda's famed pink sand in abundance, one of the best-known icons of fashionable Tucker's Town, the **Pink Beach Club** (800-355-6161; www.pinkbeach.com), is an intimate cluster of suites, most with patios or balconies. There's formal dining indoors (jackets de rigueur) but also more casual dining outdoors. Sunbathe, snorkel, or play a few rounds of golf at either of two nearby courses. Although like

MAÑANA 2000
At posh Palmilla south of the border, you'll slip out of the old and into the new in high style.



many Bermuda resorts, Pink Beach closes in mid-December and reopens in March, you can book one of the cottages in the late fall as a fond farewell to 1999.

BAHAMIAN RHYTHM

There are no worries at **Club Peace & Plenty** (800-525-2210, www.peaceandplenty.com) on Great Exuma in The Islands of The Bahamas, where the bonefishing is world-class and the shoreline is full of bays, coves, and marinas. The inn began as a bonefishing club for railroad tycoon Henry Flagler's grandnephew and his chums. Across the water is Stocking Island with its palm-covered beaches and blue-hole Mystery Cave stocked with colorful fish. And in the Bahamas, you'll ring in the New Year to the seductive rhythms of goombay music.

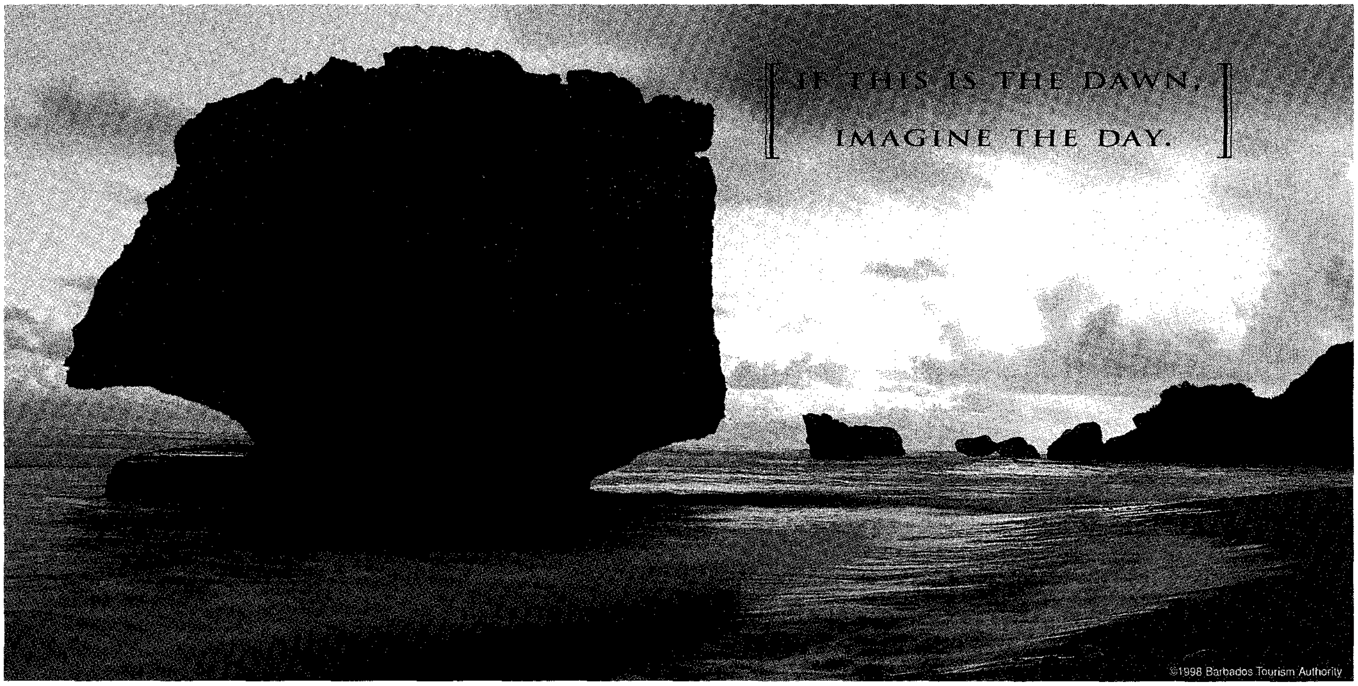
PEPPER
SHRIMP

WINNING SMILES

They're standard issue in Jamaica—where local women serve up spicy delicacies at street stalls.

INSIDER'S JAMAICA

Jamaica, one of the Caribbean's prettiest and largest islands, is encouraging visitors to get off the beaten track. Its "insider" program puts you up at gracious estates, family-run inns, beautiful villas, and mountain retreats. Among the mini adventures available: biking or rafting in the Blue Mountains, horseback riding in the rain forest or along beaches, exploring hidden caves, feeding crocodiles along the Black River, and touring an undersea



IMAGINE EVERY SHADE OF BLUE UNVEILING BEFORE YOU, SPILLING ACROSS A LIMITLESS SKY. HERE, THE HORIZON IS FILLED WITH POSSIBILITY. YOU CAN SPEND ALL DAY ON SHORES OF PINK AND WHITE SAND. LOSE YOURSELF IN A FLOWER FOREST. PLAY A ROUND ON TROPICAL GREENS. HERE, THERE ARE A THOUSAND BEAUTIFUL WAYS YOUR DAY CAN UNFOLD. FOR RESERVATIONS, PLEASE CALL YOUR TRAVEL AGENT OR 1·888·BARBADOS.

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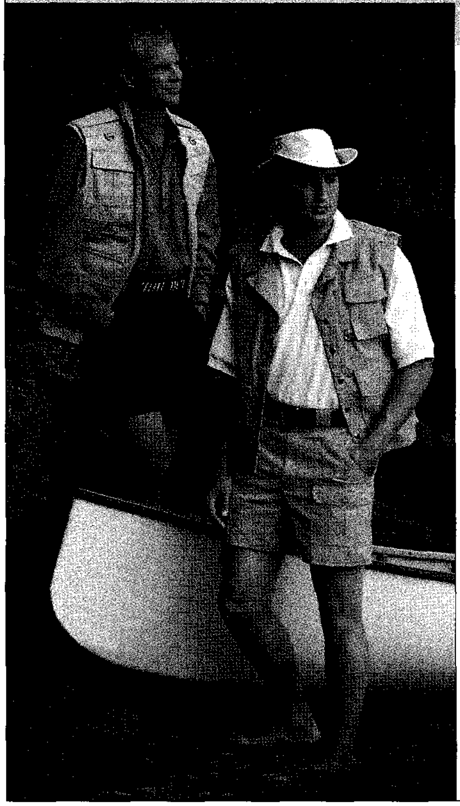
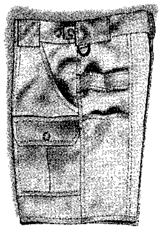


Frustrated that there were no worthwhile sailing hats and shorts available, Alex Tilley of Toronto designed some as a hobby and sold them from his home. Unexpectedly, they turned out to be *the best that ever were.*

Soon, Tilley-wearers asked for trousers, shirts, skirts, etc., with qualities similar to the lifetime-guaranteed shorts: extreme durability, anti-pickpocket pockets, "Give 'em hell!" washing instructions, a degree of casual elegance... **They needed them for travel, not for sailing!** This changed Tilley's life and could benefit yours.



Now, nearly twenty years later, there are family-owned stores in Canada *(where 'Tilleys' are made)*, mail-order offices also in the USA and UK and over a thousand retail-partners worldwide.

Call for their 80-page catalogue; you'll see how the best that ever was has just kept getting better and better.

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marine park in a partially submerged submarine. Also on the agenda are secret gardens with rare orchids, and artisan enclaves where local handicrafts are in the making. You'll attend a Jamaican house party where you can socialize with local residents and sample spicy dishes like curried goat and jerk chicken. Planter's punch and reggae will likely round out the menu. For more information, call 800-JAMAICA, or visit www.insidersjamaica.com.

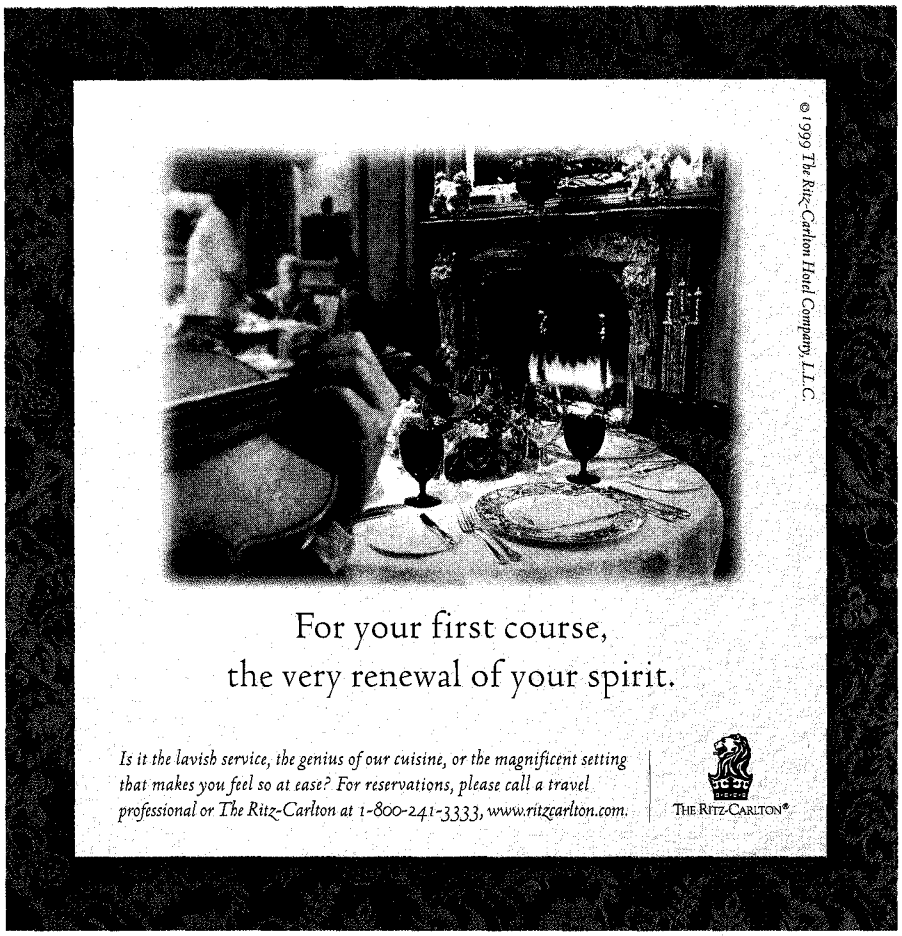
Feed the crocs along Jamaica's Black River.

The good things at **SuperClubs' Grand Lido Sans Souci** (800-467-8737, www.superclubs.com) in Ocho Rios come by the dozen. Start with its signature pink colonial facade and deluxe suites—most have Jacuzzis and panoramic views of the Caribbean. Dine casually or formally, indoors or outdoors, sit-down or buffet at your choice of six cafés, restaurants, and grills. Golf, tennis, and workouts with aerobics, stair-climbing, and yoga are available

© Len Kaufman

to those seeking to get a jump-start on their New Year's resolutions. Windsurf, kayak, sail a Hobie cat. Afterward, retreat to Charlie's Spa (named after its giant resident turtle). In the evening, enjoy the resort's cabaret, barbecues, and torchlight beach fiestas.

British royalty, Hollywood stars, and other celebs return to Montego Bay's **Half Moon Golf, Tennis & Beach Club** (800-626-0592, www.halfmoon.com.jm) again and again. With some four hundred acres of villas, cottages, and gardens set along a idyllic crescent of bay, Half Moon is an elegant blend of British colonial architecture, white wicker, floral chintz, and graceful Chippendale furniture—with private swimming pools for some suites. Its championship golf course challenges players with teasing breezes that waft off the ocean. Other sports range from scuba diving to deep-sea fishing. At night there's dancing to the rhythms of calypso and steel band on the Seagrape Terrace.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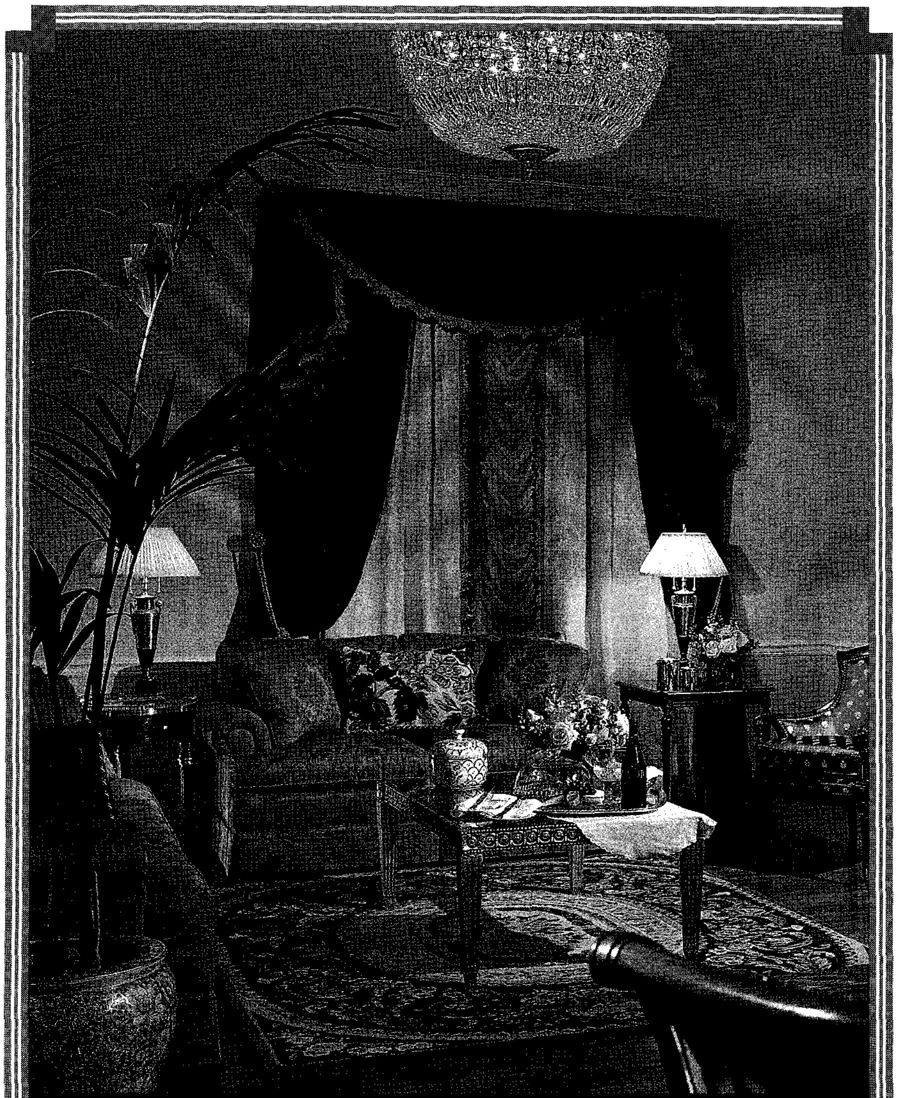
LUCK BE A LADY

On the cusp of the twenty-first century, you might want to try your hand at the gaming tables in San Juan, Puerto Rico. **Embassy Suites Hotel & Casino** (800-362-2779, www.embassysuites.com) has a Millennium Christmas package in Puerto Rico's only two-room-suite resort, located near the Isla Verde beach. There will be big band music in the ballroom, a steel band at the pool, a Latin trio in the tropical atrium, and the cacophony of slot machines and rolling dice in the casino. Champagne, noisemakers, and photographers will help make the night a grand occasion. And like all Embassy Suites, guests are kept in high spirits with a sumptuous American breakfast and a

ROYAL FLUSH Half Moon Golf, Tennis & Beach Club *(right)* keeps aristocrats coming back for more. All-inclusive SuperClubs' Grand Lido Sans Souci *(left)* will hail the millennium with a torchlight beach fiesta.



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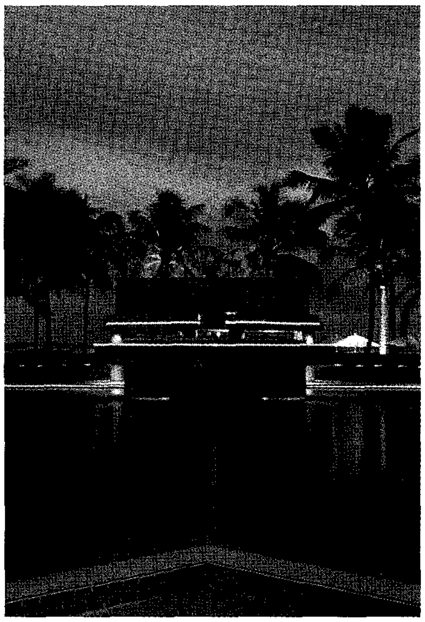
manager's nightly reception in the verdant garden atrium. Embassy Suites has stateside resorts in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina; Deerfield Beach, Florida; and Lake Tahoe, California, among other locations.

VIRGIN TERRITORY

The United States Virgin Islands are a neighborly paradise when it comes to a quick millennial getaway. Enjoy a respite at St. Thomas's uniquely romantic **Pavilions & Pools** (800-524-2001, www.pavilionsandpools.com). The warm sunshine and cooling trade winds are, of course, guaranteed. This mini resort with private pools is set apart from the bustle of Charlotte Amalie, the island's duty-free shopping center.

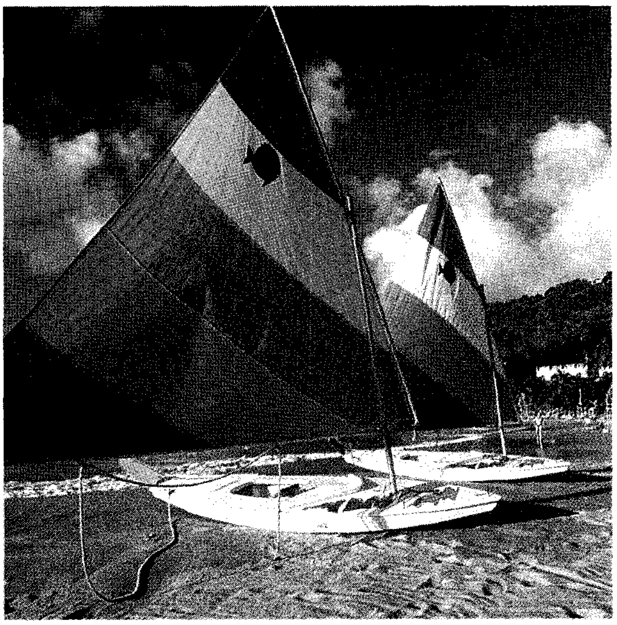


But there will be plenty of millennial merriment down the road from Charlotte Amalie (a town named for the Queen of Denmark in 1692). At **Bolongo Bay Beach Club & Villas** (800-524-4746, www.bolongo.com) you can indulge in an all-day sail (half-day snorkel) off a private yacht, or engage in a round of activities from jetskiing and windsurfing to tennis, workouts, and

> The Virgin Islands will be the first U.S. territory to greet the new era.

laps to simply sunning at one of Bolongo's three pools.

Another Virgin island is known for its ruggedness and secluded beaches. **The Westin Resort St. John** (800-808-5020, www.westin.com) offers a full range of sports activities: kayaking, snorkeling, windsurfing, parasailing, scuba diving and—get this—a floating trampoline. Tropical nature walks, stargazing tours, and a quarter-acre freshwater pool compete with its other sports activities.



POOL ROOM Time to chill out in the vast pool (left) at the Westin Resort St. John. (Right) A Sunfish sail at St. Lucia's LeSport will help smooth the transition to 2000.

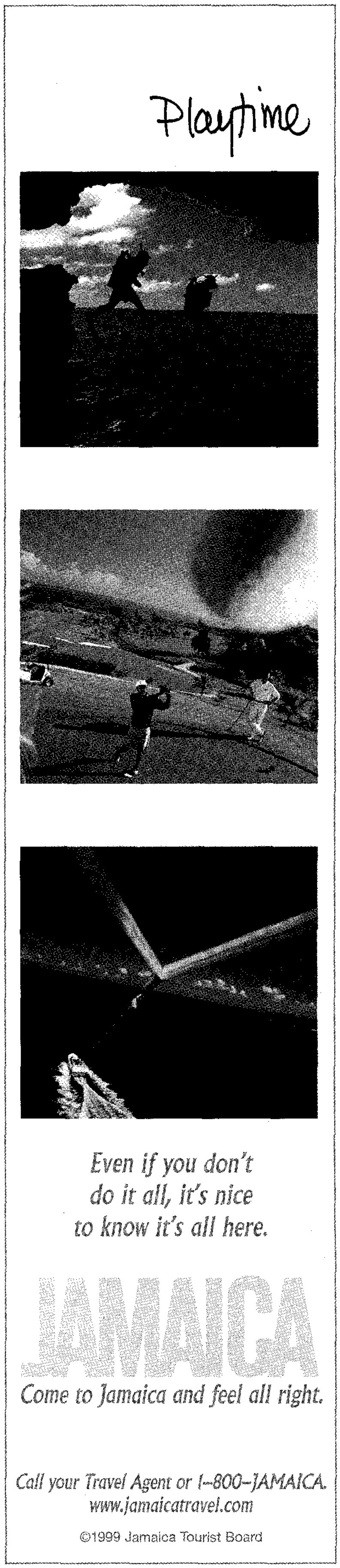
The Buccaneer (800-255-3881, www.thebuccaneer.com), a seventeenth-century manor house and sugar mill turned resort on St. Croix, has more than golf, tennis, and snokeling to offer. In the wee hours of the millennium, guests can doff ball gowns and dinner jackets and don swimsuits to visit nearby Point Udall—the first landfall in U. S. territory to witness the sunrise on January 1st.

WILD ISLE

With dozens of Caribbean islands only a plane flight away on American, BWIA, Liat, and other carriers, even remote retreats like **Dominica** are within reach for a millennial celebration. Dominica offers South Pacific-style glamour, where mountains, jungles, waterfalls, and glorious flora and fauna mix in a rustic ecosystem. And the hotels tend to be intimate and accommodating. For more information, contact the **Dominica Tourist Office** (212-949-1711, www.dominica.dm).

TWIN PEAKS

At **LeSport** (800-544-2883, www.lesport.com.lc), a getaway for couples and singles on lovely St. Lucia, have fun every which way, from kayaking and windsurfing to golf or even archery. "We're different from other all-inclusive resorts," says general manager Michael Bryant. "For example, each guest is offered a comprehensive program including spa and beauty treatments, fitness classes, holistic activities (tai chi, yoga, meditation, and stress management), and a



Playtime

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Enjoy the magical temples and shrines, savor the piquant cuisine.

diverse range of sports, all included in the price." While at the resort you can arrange for a guided climb up the famed twin Pitons, or camping atop Gimmie, the tallest mountain on the island, which has a panoramic view of the canopy of jungle.

The hillside cottages of the **Anse Chastanet Resort** in St. Lucia (800-223-1108, www.ansechastanet.com), look down on beachside suites and a secluded cove below, while the twin peaks of the Pitons rise in the distance. The tropical hardwood furniture was personally designed by architect/owner Nick Troubetzkoy to blend harmoniously with the natural surroundings. All rooms contain original artwork from the owner's private collection. If you've always wanted to learn scuba diving, Anse Chastanet is an excellent place to get started. It is the only resort located in the heart of the St. Lucia Marine Reserve.

LUSH LIFE

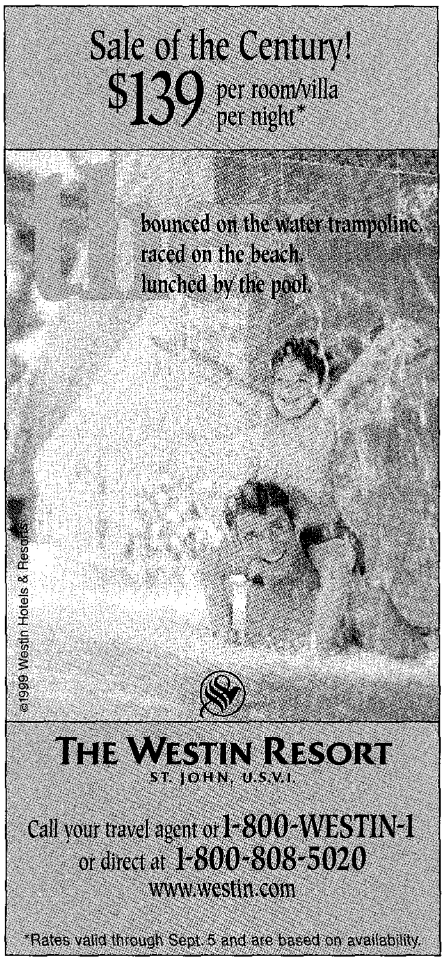
Sailing, snorkeling, and diving couldn't be better than in the crystal waters of **St. Vincent & The Grenadines**, an unspoiled string of thirty-two mountainous islands in the southern Caribbean. Off the main tourist path, the islands attract both jet-setters—Mustique is one of their favorites—and low-profile adventurers who prefer sports and privacy to boisterous nightlife. St. Vincent's black volcanic sand offers a stark contrast to the powdery white variety in the Grenadines. If you're a high-energy traveler, climb four-thousand feet to the top of La Soufrière, St. Vincent's renowned volcano. For more information, contact St. Vincent & The Grenadines Tourist Office (800-729-1726, www.svgtourism.com).

BAJAN BACCHANAL

On southerly **Barbados** (800-221-9831, www.barbados.org), where

PRIVATE LIVES

Beach it at a luxury resort on the west coast of Barbados *(left)*. *(Right)* The Ritz-Carlton in Bali presides over a sweeping expanse in the South Pacific.



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bounced on the water trampoline.
raced on the beach.
lunched by the pool.

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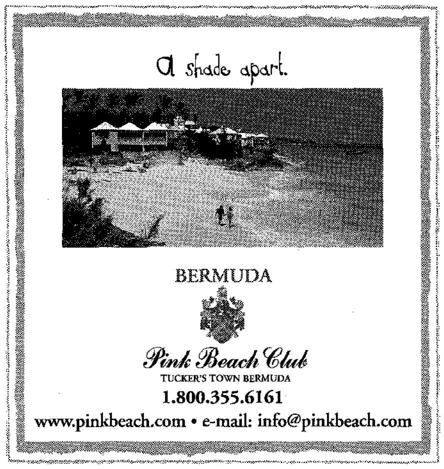

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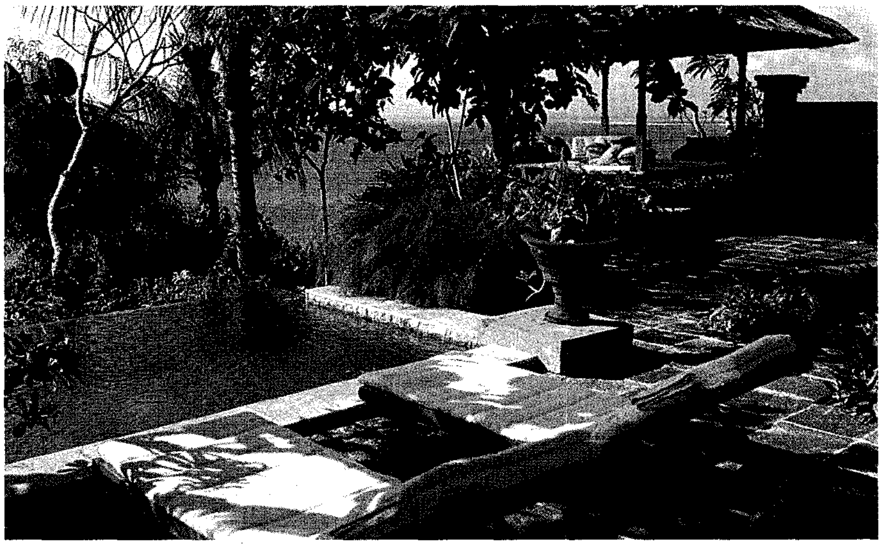
cool British manners and hot Caribbean sauces pleasantly coexist, the west coast is lined with luxury resorts. If you're a hiker, there's the hilly Scotland District in northern Barbados, and a rugged, uncrowded east coast. Music? The island's landowners open their plantations for jazz and opera festivals throughout the year. In early October you can catch the grand finale of the second annual "Spirit of Unity" tour (kicked off in L.A. on August 1st), a music festival highlighting the best of reggae and world music from the Caribbean. Sports? Watch a cricket match or play a round of golf at the Sandy Lane Hotel or the Royal Westmoreland. On millennium night, go native and enjoy one of the island's culinary delights—flying fish. Or sample pepper pot (a spicy stew), jug-jug (a mix of beef, pork, and green peas), and cou-cou (an okra and cornmeal dish). Rum may well upstage champagne as your celebratory midnight drink of choice.



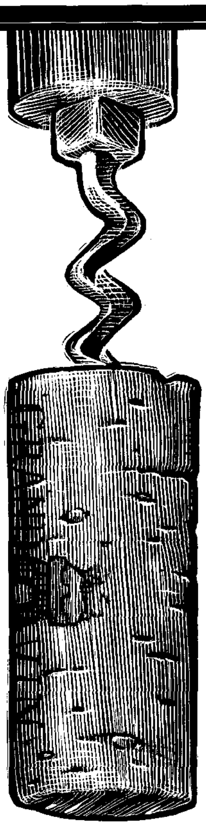
PARADISE NOW

For a smorgasbord of warm-weather adventures, think **Four Seasons** (800-332-3442, www.fourseasons.com), now a global enterprise. At its award-winning resort on Nevis, a tiny Caribbean island near St. Martin, you can golf on arguably the region's most challenging course. You will be royally pampered in the spa at Four Seasons Resort Hualalai at Historic Ka`upulehu on the Big Island of Hawaii. Four Seasons also has a stress-free spread on Maui at Wailea beach that is modeled after a Hawaiian palace with fountains and waterfalls set against tropical hillsides.

In Bali, the world's best-known resort island, **The Ritz-Carlton** (800-241-3333, www.ritzcarlton.com) dramatically perched on a scenic bluff, can be your base for shopping for baskets, batiks, and bangles; sightseeing by bike or boat; enjoying the magical landscape of temples and shrines; and savoring the piquant cuisine of Indonesia.

DAWN'S EARLIEST LIGHT

How's your geography? If you're in **New Zealand** at year-end, you'll be among the first in the global queue to see the sun rise on the new millennium. The islands of New



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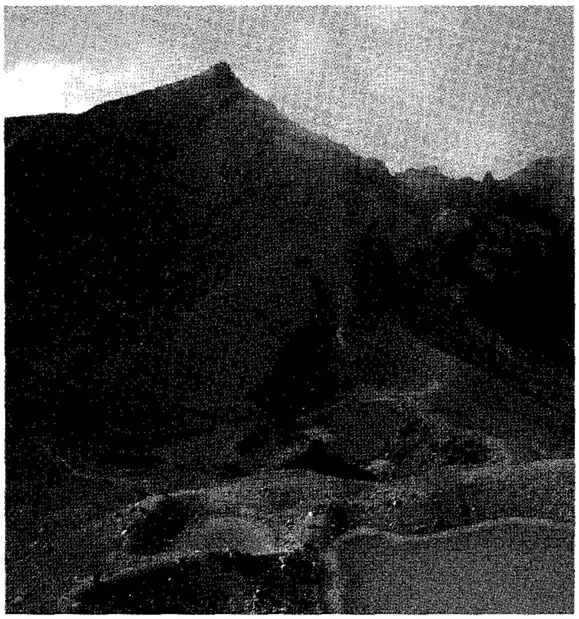
Zealand are positioned just west of the international date line. Sunrise in New Zealand will precede dawn on the U.S. east coast by some eighteen hours (twenty-one hours for L.A.). And with reversed seasons, the weather is summery. Gisborne on New Zealand's North Island will be the first metropolis to view the arrival of the millennium and one of many cities with events planned to fit this once in a lifetime occasion.

If you're a moderately experienced bicyclist, you can join a six-hundred-mile, Auckland-to-Gisborne tour with white-water rafting, bungee jumping, game fishing, and swimming with dolphins along the way.



PEAK SEASON A day trek rewards adventurers with views of the humbly named Blue Lake (left) on New Zealand's conical Mt. Ngauruhoe. (Right) Radisson's Tahiti-based Paul Gauguin

New Zealand's other millennial specials include Odyssey's End in Gisborne, a twenty-four-hour festival that will feature a poignant Maori ceremony at sunset, David Bowie performing at midnight, and Kiri Te Kanawa performing at sunrise. Peak 2000 is a gastronomic party that will take place twelve-hundred feet atop the Te Mata Peak on North Island's east coast. The Millennium Marathon starts at 6 A.M. on January 1st in Hamilton. The Sky Tower Millennium Celebration is an all-night party in the southern hemisphere's tallest manmade tower that stands 570-feet high. Book Kingfish Lodge Resort's Taittinger Champagne Millennium Extravaganza—set in the sybaritic ambience of Northland's Whangaroa Harbor. There you can enjoy kingfish along with other fresh foods and fine domestic and imported wines, as well as kayak or cruise the coastal waters as you await the dawn's early light. For more information, call the New Zealand Tourism Board at 800-388-KIWI or visit www.purenz.com.

Twenty-four hour Kiwi fest will feature Maori, Bowie, and Te Kanawa.

Or, if you decide to herald the new century with that long dreamed of visit to China, include a stay at **The Portman Ritz-Carlton** (800-241-3333, www.ritzcarlton.com) in Shanghai. Stroll along the riverfront

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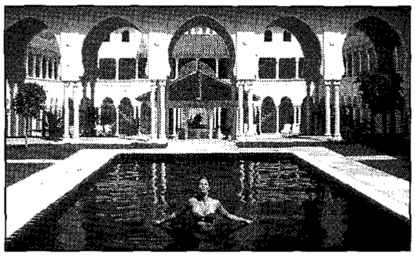

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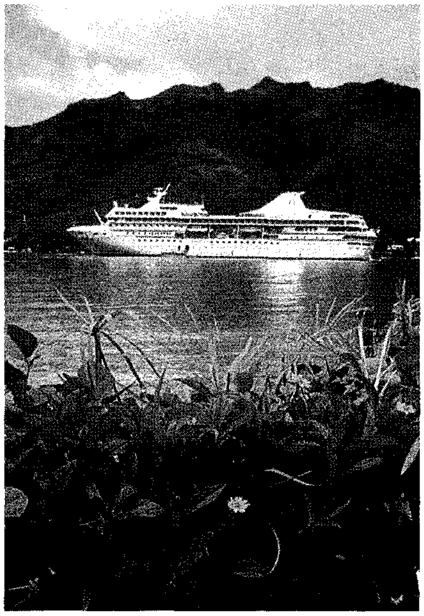
embankment (shades of the city's steamy past), hunt for antiques, visit the Jiang Ying bird and flower market. And save time for the Shangai Museum, which tracks the history of Chinese art with superbly arranged displays.

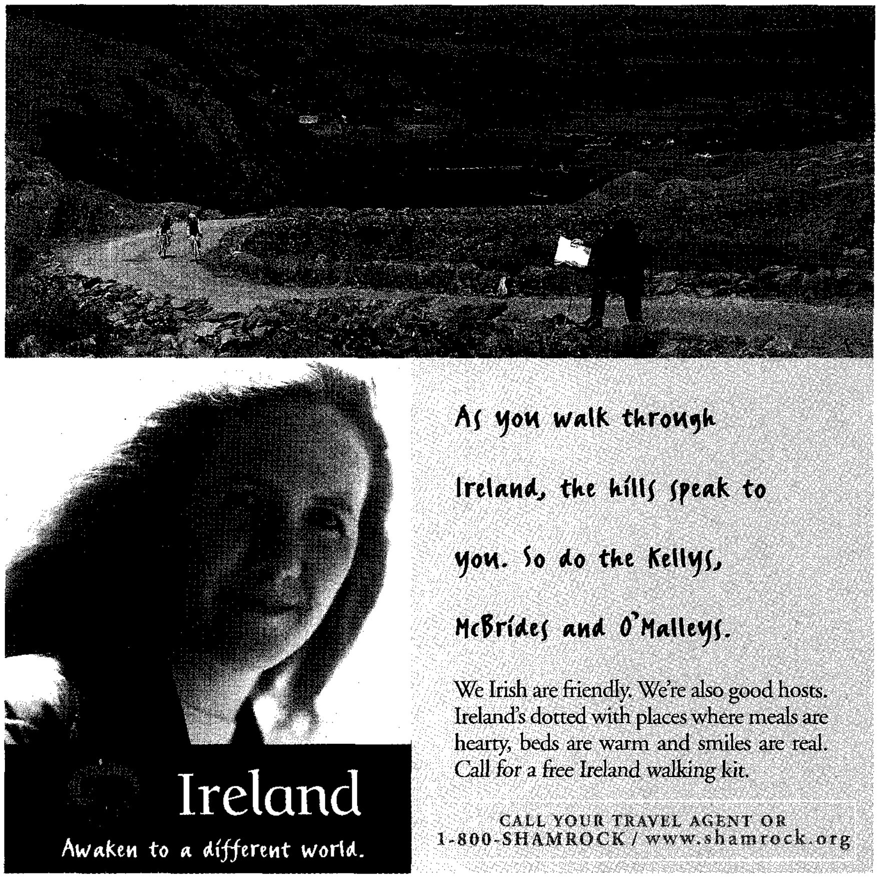
DOING THE ZIGZAG

Open your mind to other possibilities beyond exploring the planet's terra firma. Sail into the sunrise in the South Pacific. No need to pack and repack for your journey into the future. Make your stateroom your time capsule.



The newest water sport inspired by the millennium is zigzagging across the international date line from December 31st to January 1st. On its voyage from Sydney, Australia to Wellington, New Zealand, the Legend of the Seas floating resort will tack back and forth across the imaginary line (temporarily losing or gaining a day) as the millennium goes ballistic.

In the primitive islands that provided a refuge for a famous Post-impressionist, cruise from Tahiti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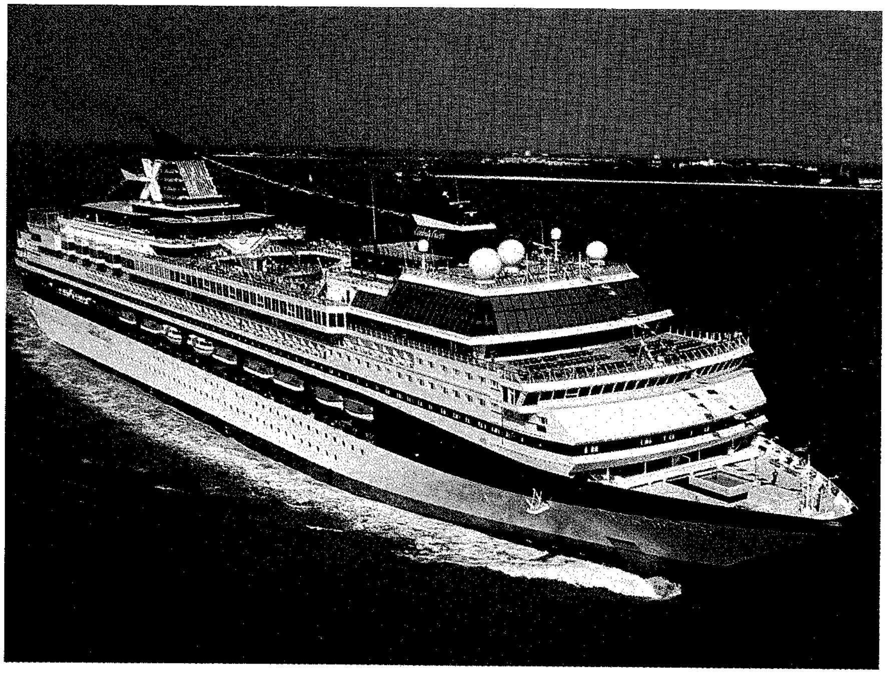
Watch the sky light up The Islands of The Bahamas . . . or sail into the South Pacific sunrise.

through French Polynesia aboard the **Radisson Seven Seas Cruises'** luxurious Paul Gauguin (800-424-3964, www.rssc.com). Watch the dazzling sky over Nuku Hiva in the Marquesas Islands as the millennium unfolds. On the Song of Flowers cruise from Darwin, Australia, to Wellington, New Zealand, veteran CBS News commentator Edwin Newman will anchor a lecture series that will discuss important events of the twentieth century, with plenty of crystal-ball gazing into the future.

Celebrity Cruises (800-437-3111, www.celebrity-cruises.com) has its own grand partying planned for guests on five cruises. As culinary consultant to Celebrity, super-chef Michel Roux is developing menus specifically for the coming galas. European cuisine will prevail. Depending on accommodations, millennial gifts, many customized by Tiffany, will include a china box, a marine chronometer, and a solid brass clock framed in a mahogany box.

Streamlined and upscale, Celebrity's Century will watch the sky light up in The Islands of The Bahamas while the Mercury, Galaxy, and Horizon will see a fireworks display off the coast of Hispaniola. And the Zenith, departing out of San Juan, will slip through the Panama Canal and sail up the Mexican Riviera to Cabo San Lucas.

Radisson's spanking new Seven Seas Navigator will transit the Panama Canal on its millennial journey from Ft. Lauderdale to Los Angeles. At the masquerade balls on all three of its ships, passengers will dress up as their favorite



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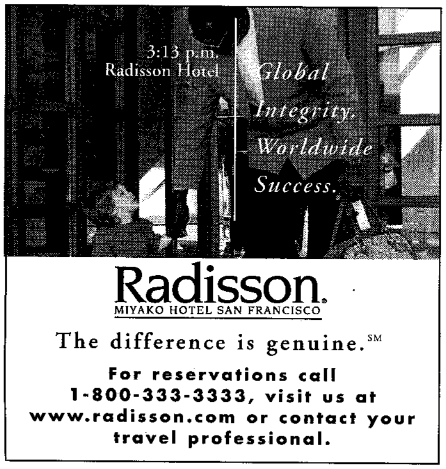
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character, real or imaginary, past or present. And traversing the "big ditch" will be a historical experience. On December 31, 1999, the United States will hand the canal over to Panama after nearly a century of American control.

EURO EVES

BRITAIN'S COUNTDOWN

Throughout Europe the approaching turn of the century will be celebrated in high style. But perhaps no enterprise has generated more enthusiasm and press than the twenty-acre Millennium Dome exhibition space on London's Greenwich Peninsula—home to Greenwich Mean Time. A parade of yearlong exhibits is expected to attract millions. The nation will also ring in the new century with more than a hundred churches participating in a simultaneous New Year's Eve peal of bells. Witness London's colorful countdown by staying at the Four Seasons right on Park Lane, near Buckingham Palace.

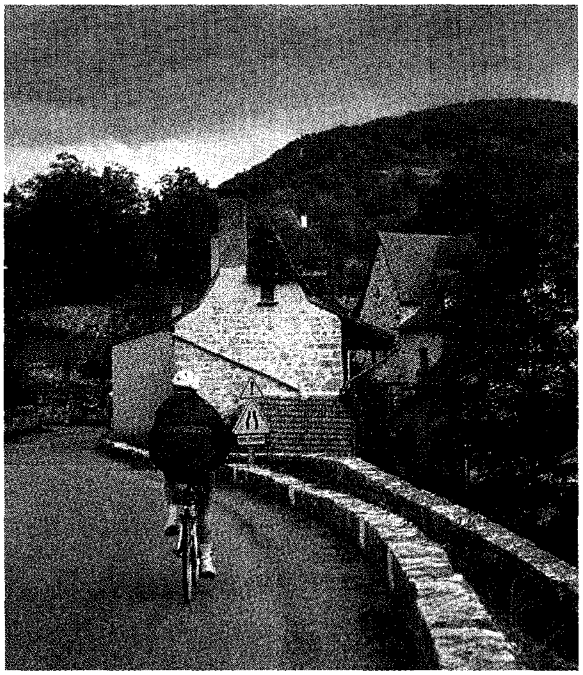
CEOAL NA GALA

With only a bit of blarney, the **Irish Tourist Board** (800-223-6470, www.ireland.travel.ie) boasts: "The party starts here!" Ireland officially launched its series of millennium bashes nine months ahead of the rest of the world during its 1999 St. Patrick's Festival. The centerpiece of Ireland's string of carnivals is the world's biggest drum, more than six feet high and fifteen feet in diameter. Part lambeg and part bodhrán in design, the drum was commissioned as a symbol to unify the different strains of Irish culture. It will make its rounds, along with more than fifty musicians, to eight millennium festivals nationwide.

There's no better way of getting close to Ireland's hauntingly beautiful west coast than on a bicycle. Through September, **Bike Ireland** (800-257-2226, www.bikeireland.com) offers an eight-day tour starting from the Cliffs of Moher's seven-hundred vertical feet of seawall and proceeding through the Burren moonscape in County Clare to the verdant bogs and thatched-roof houses near Clifden

2000 OPTIONS

Celebrants aboard Celebrity's Mercury *(left)* will watch fireworks off the Haitian coast, while Randonée bikers in Provence *(right)* perform solo with solid support in the wings.



Louisiana

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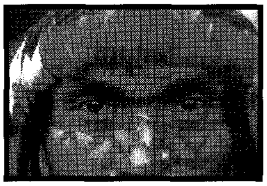

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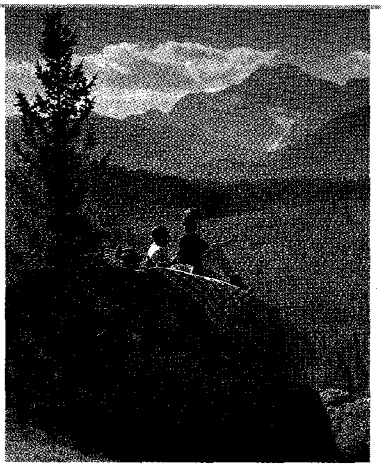

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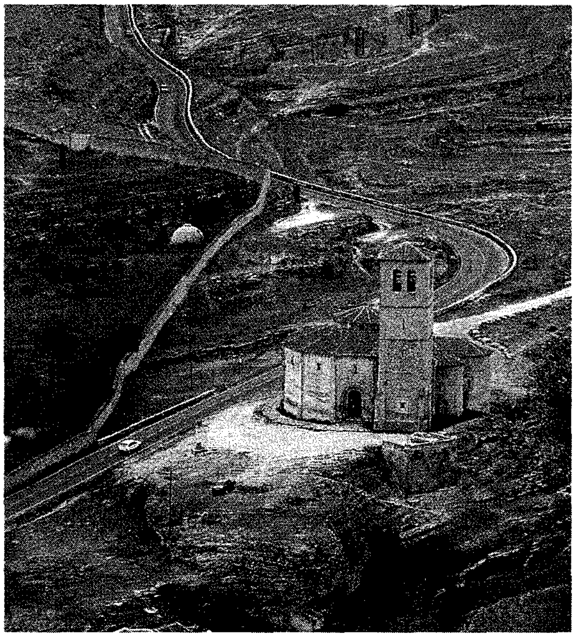
in Connemara. Included is a side trip by ferry to the mist-covered, rural Aran Islands.

Ireland's towns and villages will be staging festivals, pageants, and parades celebrating all aspects of Irish culture until the curtain comes down on the millennial marathon. Witness the grand finale in Dublin's House of Fun, where the madness will meld with other celebrations around the globe through high-tech linkups and an exploding supernova of lights.



PILGRIM'S PROGRESS Spain's medieval trail (left) leads to St. James's burial site. (Right) Guests on Caravella Italia's year-end tour will witness the glories of Venice.

FRENCH TOAST

Europe's most extravagant millennium party may prove to be Le Bal du Roy at the Palace of Versailles, complete with banquet and fireworks. You can dance the night away in Louis XIV's opulent digs when you book "Celebrating the Millennium in Paris and Versailles," a trip arranged by **France In Your Glass** (800-578-0903, www.inyourglass.com). During your holiday you'll also visit a cellar of one of the Grande Marque houses such as Taittinger or Lantage in Champagne, a town northeast of the French capital. France In Your Glass has tours of such estimable vineyards as Clos Vougeot, Lafite Rothschild, and Château Neuf-du-Pape. Meals are often provided by château owners who are friends of tour company founder Ronald Holden. Accommodations—mostly at inns that are members of the prestigious Relais & Châteaux group—are exceptional.

> Dance the night away in Louis XIV's opulent digs.

HAPPY TRAILS

Loosely translated, the French word *randonnée* means a trip under your own steam, and that's what **Randonnée Tours** (800-465-6488; www.randonneetours.com) provides with its self-guided walking, biking, and driving vacations. "It's a new style of travel," says president and owner Ruth Marr. "There's no group or guide. But there's full support behind the scenes. We organize the trip—your route, accommodations, meals, luggage transfers, all the logistics." Randonnée specializes in trips through Provence and other regions of France, but it also has self-guided tours to Italy, England, Ireland, Switzerland, and the Netherlands.

"Europe was made on the pilgrim road to Campostela," wrote Goethe, alluding to Spain's medieval trail that pilgrims have taken for centuries from the French border, near Pamplona, to the burial site of St. James the Apostle in Santiago de Compostela. Through **Camino Tours** (800-938-9311, www.caminotours.com), which specializes in luxury walking and biking vacations in Spain, you can follow the same route, overnighting in charming *paradores* (inns) along the way and viewing the relics of St. James in Santiago's impressive cathedral. For the millennium, Camino offers "Walking the Canary Islands," (believed by some to be remnants of the Lost Atlantis) where the terrain, from lava beds to magnificent canyons, is striking.

VENI, VIDI . . .

To usher in the new era, you might take a tour of Rome, Florence, and Venice—what **Caravella Italia** (888-665-2112, www.seeitaly.com), which offers customized trips to Italy, calls the "Three Classic Cities Millennium." Celebrate Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve with Pope John Paul II in Rome. After exploring the famous art (and shopping) treasures of Florence, welcome the new millennium with an elegant gourmet dinner at the Grand Hotel Palazzo dei Dogi in Venice.

Or commemorate the mega-milestone the Italian way by booking at Four Seasons Hotel Milano, a fifteenth-century medieval monastery with divinely modern amenities.

SWISS CONNECTION

St. Moritz, Gstaad, Zermatt with its Matterhorn are quintessential **Switzerland**, where you can take pleasure in an alpen style of casual European elegance. The special charm of this European crossroads results from its invigorating mixture of German, French, and Italian cultures. As summer glides into fall, the millennium looms larger and a holiday in Switzerland, colorfully etched in whites and evergreens can provide a fitting prelude to the

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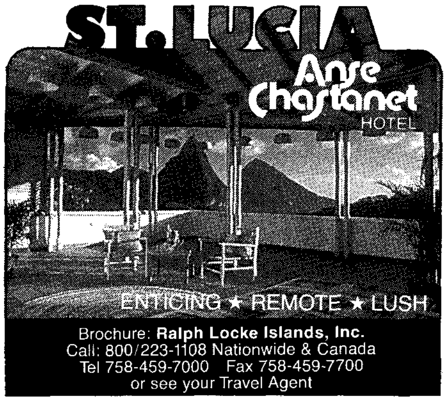

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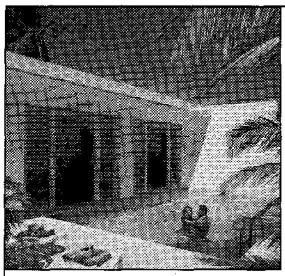

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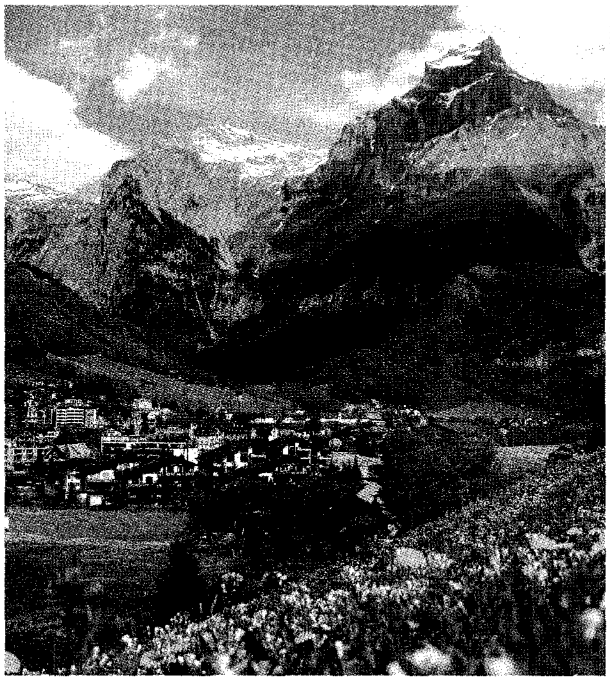
upcoming millennial season. The panoramic parade of peaks provide the backdrop for action adventures—skiing, skating, climbing, and other sports.

Whether in mountain hamlets or amid the glitter of Geneva and the aristocratic shops of Zurich's Bahnhofstrasse, you'll find a tradition of urbane innkeepers and talented chefs. Switzerland boasts more than two-thousand castles, ancient mansions, and ruins. Take the Golden Pass Express from Lucerne to Montreux where you can visit Castle Chillon, Switzerland's most imposing castle dating back to the thirteenth century. Among the most alluring side trips: scenic train rides such as the Glacier Express (St. Moritz to Zermatt) and the William Tell Express (first a steamer across Lake Lucerne, then a train to Lugano). Visit www.switzerland-tourism.com, or call 212-757-5944 for more information.

Swissair (800-221-4750, www.swissair.com) has frequent service from nine major U.S. cities to Zurich, Geneva, or Basel and it provides seamless baggage connections via railway to most resorts. Among the perks in first class are Sony handheld video players—you can catch a movie whenever you want to, rather than only at scheduled times. All outbound Zurich flights offer meals featuring fresh, organically grown vegetables, fruits, and other healthful ingredients.



PEAK EXPERIENCE
Toast to the natural beauty of the Swiss Alps (left) above Engelberg. (Right) Mountain Sobek guides climb up Mt. Kilimanjaro.

...a tradition of urbane innkeepers and talented chefs.

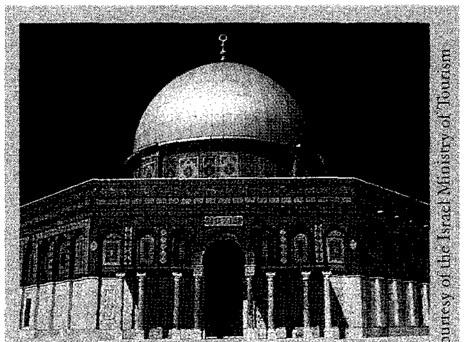
SUMMIT MEETINGS

"I'll be on the Kili climb," says Todd Burleson, who is guiding a mountaineering group that plans to reach the top of Tanzania's Mt. Kilimanjaro (19,339 feet) on January 1, 2000. "It's a big hike, but a fit person can do it with-out previous training." His

Alpine Ascents International (206-378-1927, www.alpineascents.com) specializes in guiding climbers to the tops of the tallest mountains on every continent. For instance, Argentina's Aconcagua (22,829 feet) is another exhilarating climb offered for the millennium. There are also plenty of treks near the Tibetan border, with a climb to the base camp of Mt. Everest (17,000 feet).

© R. Machinlay

If you want a first-class trip through the Canadian Arctic across the North Pole to Siberia, contact **Arctic Odysseys** (800-574-3021, www.arcticodysseys.com). This tour company believes that adventuring is best undertaken with turboprops and helicopters as primary transportation—no backpacking. On its "Arctic Millennium X Two Odyssey," you can fly from Anchorage to Nome to the Asian Kamchatka Peninsula where you'll celebrate the Big Night with Russians. Afterwards, you'll return to Anchorage (back across the date line) for a second millennial bash.

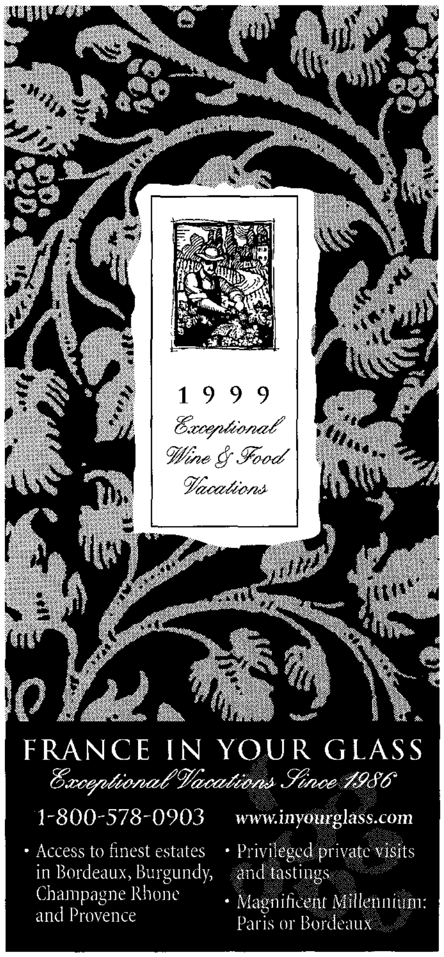

Courtesy of the Israel Ministry of Tourism

'WHERE TIME BEGAN'

Israel has its mind as much on its past as it does on its future. "Come to the land where time began," reads a current travel brochure, noting that this occasion, after all, marks the two-thousandth birthday of Jesus of Nazareth. In celebration, Israel is turning Year 2000 into a full twelve months of religious and historic exhibits, festivities, and events. "For most countries," says Arie Sommer, Israel's North American Commissioner for Tourism, "the millennium means the biggest New Year's Eve party the globe has ever seen. But for us, the millennium will encompass an entire year or more." For information on Holy Land sites and festivities, call 888-77-ISRAEL (774-7723) or visit www.goisrael.com.

MAGIC CARPET

Partake in a feast of the senses and visit Morocco aboard the largest airline in Africa (and one of the largest airlines in the Middle East), **Royal Air Maroc** (800-344-6726, www.royalairmaroc.com). Service is offered between Casablanca and several U.S. gateways, as well as direct service from Casablanca to many European cities. It also flies to Middle Eastern hubs such as Cairo, Gaza, and Abudhabi. Experience the rich exoticism of Marrakech souks, folkloric festivals, and picturesque countryside. Relax at the seaside of Agadir or explore the historic mosques of Fès.



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ESCAPE TACTICS

WEB WISDOM

There may be no candlelit suites or Everests to conquer in the mythic ether of cyberspace, but when it comes to making travel arrangements, a Web site can be your best ally. **Preview Travel** at www.previewtravel.com can guide you through a bazaar of millennium offerings. "It's as though you have turned your travel agent's screen around. You access the same system as they do—the latest information on airfares, hotels, car rentals, vacation packages, cruises, maps, and weather," says Preview's Scott Radcliffe. The popular Web site draws on Fodor's guides for details on some two hundred destinations from Orlando to London. Preview's site provides information on more than a thousand vacation packages, including guest room photos and feedback from other travelers. And you can take advantage of late-breaking deals due to airfare wars or excess inventory. Preview Travel members also enjoy special travel rates.

Enter Preview's (and MasterCard's) millennium celebration contest that will put eight winners and their guests up at a château in Champagne during the millennium holidays. The grand-prize winner will round-trip it to Paris and back on the Concorde.

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POSTCARDS FROM NEPAL

Whether kayaking with the Kuna Indians in the Estatupile Islands of the Caribbean, trekking in Nepal, or going on a camel safari in Rajasthan, **Mountain Travel-Sobek** (888-MTSOBEK, www.mtsobek.com) can help you get started. As North America's oldest adventure-travel company (it's "thirty" this year), Sobek provides guides, gear, and groundbreaking itineraries for its travelers.

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1. HOW TO ENTER: Starting June 14, 1999 you will be automatically entered in the Celebrity Cruises Millennium Sweepstakes when you visit your travel agent and book a Millennium 1999/2000 cruise on one of these Celebrity Cruises ships: 1) Century, 2) Galaxy, 3) Horizon, 4) Mercury and 5) Zenith. You may also enter by handprinting your complete name and address and the name of one of the Celebrity Cruises' ships offering a Millennium cruise, and the name and address of your travel agent/agency (if any) on a 3½" x 5½" postcard and mail to: Celebrity Cruises Millennium Sweepstakes P.O. Box 4144, Grand Rapids, MN 55730-4144. Only one entry per household permitted whether by booking cruise or entering by mail. Automatic booking entries must be made by November 12, 1999 to be eligible. Mail entries must be postmarked by November 5, 1999 and received by November 12, 1999 to be eligible. **2. PRIZES:** A random drawing will be held from all eligible entries on or about November 17, 1999 by Marden-Kane Inc. an independent judging organization whose decisions are final and binding. (1) Grand Prize of a 1999 standard equipped Mercedes-Benz SLK roadster, Approximate Retail Value $40,000.00. Grand Prize winner must have and will be required to furnish proof of a valid driver's license. (5) Five First Prizes: cruise for two on Celebrity Cruises' newest vessel, Millennium for 7 days to the Caribbean, includes all meals aboard ship, outside cabin, port tax, entertainment and more. Air transportation to the port of embarkation and return not included. Choice of departure dates and itinerary are at the discretion of the sponsor. A.R.V. $2,598.00 each cruise for two. Cruise prize must be taken within one year of notification and is subject to availability. All other expenses are the responsibility of the prize winner. No substitution or transfer or cash equivalent of prize permitted. Celebrity Cruises Inc.'s terms and conditions of ticket passage apply. (5) Five First Prizes will be awarded in the following manner. One First Prize will be awarded in a random drawing from eligible automatic bookings and mail-in entries from each of the five Celebrity Cruises ships offering a Millennium cruise: 1) Century, 2) Galaxy, 3) Horizon, 4) Mercury and 5) Zenith. Total value of all prizes $52,990.00. All prizes will be awarded. **3. NOTIFICATION:** Winners will be notified by mail and winner will be required to execute and return an Affidavit of Eligibility and Release and guest a Travel Release form within 10 days of issuance of notification or an alternate winner will be selected. Odds of winning are dependent on the number of eligible entries received. **4. GENERAL RULES:** Sweepstakes is open to legal U.S. residents 25 years of age or older except employees and the immediate families of Celebrity Cruises Inc., Royal Caribbean International, their respective affiliates, subsidiaries, advertising agencies and Marden-Kane Inc. All Federal, State and local laws and regulations apply. Void where prohibited. Delivery of the Mercedes-Benz automobile will be made at the dealer closest to the winner's residence if possible. Title, license fees, insurance, and any options not provided by Sponsor are the responsibility of the Grand Prize Winner. Winners agree that the sponsor, their agencies and their employees will not be liable for injury, loss or damage of any kind resulting from participation in this promotion or from acceptance or use of the prize awarded. Taxes are the sole responsibility of the prize winners. Winners consent to the use of their name, photograph or likeness for advertising and publicity purposes without additional compensation, except where prohibited. **5. WINNERS:** For a winners list, available after 11/29/99, send a stamped self-addressed envelope no later than 12/6/99 to Celebrity Cruises Winners P.O. Box 716, Sayreville, NJ 08871-0716. Sponsor: Celebrity Cruises Inc. 1080 Caribbean Way, Miami, FL 33132. Administrator: Marden-Kane Inc., Manhasset, NY 11030

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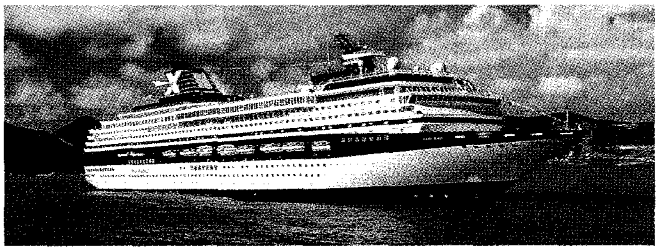

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3. Contestants may submit one (1) entry per household. Entries may be submitted anytime from August 16, 1999 through November 22, 1999. All submitted entries become the property of *The New Yorker* and will not be acknowledged or returned.
4. Contestants may enter the contest by registering on-line in the "Millennium Travel Advisory: Global Party" section on newyorkerreaderlink.com at www.newyorkerreaderlink.com. Entries that are lost, late, misdirected, garbled, or incompletely received, for any reason, including by reason of hardware, software, browser or network failure, malfunction, congestion, or incompatibility at sponsor or elsewhere, will not be eligible.
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10. For name of winner send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to the "Great Getaways" Sweepstakes Winner ("Millennium Travel Advisory: Global Party") *The New Yorker* Marketing Department, 4 Times Square, 20th floor, New York, NY 10036 after January 3, 2000.

LETTER FROM MAURITANIA

THE TRUCK

Hitching through hell.

BY RYSZARD KAPUSCINSKI

IN the darkness, I spotted two glaring lights. They were far away and moved about violently, as if they were the eyes of a wild animal thrashing in its cage. I was sitting on a stone at the edge of the Ouadane oasis, in the Sahara, northeast of Nouakchott, the Mauritanian capital. For an entire week now, I had been trying to leave this place—to no avail. It is difficult to get to Ouadane, but even more difficult to depart. No marked or paved road leads to it, and there is no scheduled transport. Every few days—or weeks—a truck will pass, and if the driver agrees to take you with him you go; if not, you simply stay, waiting who knows how long for the next opportunity.

The Mauritanians who were sitting beside me stirred. The night chill had set in, a chill that descends abruptly and, after the burning hell of the sun-filled days, can be almost piercingly painful. It is a cold from which no sheepskin or quilt can adequately protect you. These people had nothing but old, frayed blankets, in which they sat tightly wrapped, motionless, like statues.

A black pipe poked out of the ground nearby. This was the region's sole gas station, and passing vehicles always stopped here. There was no other attraction in the oasis. Ordinarily, the days went by uneventfully and unchangeably, resembling in this the monotony of the desert climate: the same sun always shone, hot and solitary, in the same empty, cloudless sky.

AT the sight of the still distant headlights, the Mauritanians began talking among themselves. I didn't understand a word of their language. It's quite possible that they were saying, "At last! It's finally coming! We have lived to see it!"

It was recompense for the long days spent waiting, gazing patiently at the inert horizon, on which no moving object, no living thing that might rouse you from the numbness of hopeless anticipation, had appeared for a long time. The arrival of a truck—cars are too fragile for this terrain—didn't fundamentally alter the lives of the people. The vehicle usually stopped for a moment and then quickly drove on. Yet even this brief sojourn was vital to them: it injected variety into their lives, provided a subject for later conversation, and, above all, was both material proof of the existence of another world and a bracing confirmation that that world, since it had sent them a mechanical envoy, must know that they existed.

Perhaps they were also engaged in a routine debate: will it—or won't it—get here? Travelling in these corners of the Sahara is a risky, unending lottery, perpetual uncertainty. Along these roadless expanses full of crevices, sinkholes, protruding boulders, sand dunes and rocky mounds, loose stones and fields of slippery gravel, a vehicle advances at a snail's pace—several kilometres an hour. Each wheel has its own drive, and each one, metre by metre, turning here, stopping there, going up, down, or around, searches for something to grip. Most of

"The water, disgusting Saharan water—warm, dirty, thick with sand and sludge—extended my life but took away my vision of paradise."

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the time, the sum of these persistent efforts and exertions, which are accompanied by the roar of the straining and overheated engine and by the bone-bruising lunges of the swaying platform, finally results in the truck's moving forward.

But the Mauritanians also knew that a truck could get hopelessly stuck—sometimes just a step away from the oasis, on its very threshold. This can happen when a storm moves mountains of sand onto the track. Either the truck's occupants manage to dig out the road or the driver finds a detour—or he simply turns around and goes back where he came from. Another storm will eventually move the dunes farther, and clear the way once more.

This time, however, the electric lights were drawing nearer and nearer. At a certain moment, their glow started to pick out the crowns of date palms that had been hidden in darkness, and the shabby walls of mud huts, and the goats and cows asleep by the side of the road, until, finally, trailing clouds of dust behind it, an enormous Berliet truck drew to a stop in front of us, with a clang and a thud of metal. Berliets are French-made trucks adapted for roadless desert terrain. They have large wheels with wide tires, and air filters mounted high atop their hoods. Because of their great size and the prominent shape of the air filter, from a distance they resemble the fronts of old steam engines.

The driver climbed down from the cab using a ladder—a dark-skinned, barefoot Mauritanian in an ankle-length indigo djellabah. He was, like the majority of his countrymen, tall and powerfully built. People and animals with substantial body weight endure tropical heat better.

The Mauritanians from the oasis surrounded the driver. A cacophony of greetings, questions, and well-wishings erupted. This went on and on. Everybody was shouting and gesticulating, as if haggling in a noisy marketplace. After a while, they began to point at me. I was a pitiful sight—dirty, unshaved, and, above all, wasted by the nightmarish heat of the Saharan summer. An experienced Frenchman had warned me earlier: It will feel as if someone were sticking a knife into you. Into your back. Into your head. At noon, the rays of the sun beat down with the force of a knife.

The driver looked at me and at first said nothing. Then he motioned toward the truck with his hand and called out to me—"*Yallah!*" ("Let's go! We're off!") I climbed into the cab and slammed the door shut. We set off immediately.

I HAD no sense of where we were going. Sand flashed by in the glow of the headlights, shimmering with different shades, laced with strips of gravel and shards of rock. The wheels reared up on granite ledges or sank down into hollows and stony fissures. In the deep, black night, one could see only two spots of light—two bright, clearly outlined orbs, sliding over the surface of the desert. Nothing else was visible.

Before long, I began to suspect that we were driving blindly, on a shortcut to somewhere, because there were no demarcation points, no signs, posts, or any other traces of a roadway. I tried to question the driver. I gestured at the darkness around us and asked, "Nouakchott?"

He looked at me and laughed. "Nouakchott?" He repeated this dreamily, as if it were the Hanging Gardens of Semiramis that I was asking him about—so beautiful, but for us lowly ones too high to reach. I concluded from this that we were not headed in the direction I desired, but I did not know how to ask him where, in that case, we were going. I desperately wanted to establish some contact with him, to get to know him even a little. "Ryszard," I said, pointing at myself. Then I pointed at him. He understood. "Salim," he said, and laughed again. Silence fell. We must have come upon a smooth stretch of desert, for the Berliet began to roll along more gently and quickly (exactly how fast I don't know, since all the instruments were broken). We drove on for a time without speaking, until finally I fell asleep.

A sudden silence awoke me. The engine had stopped. The truck stood

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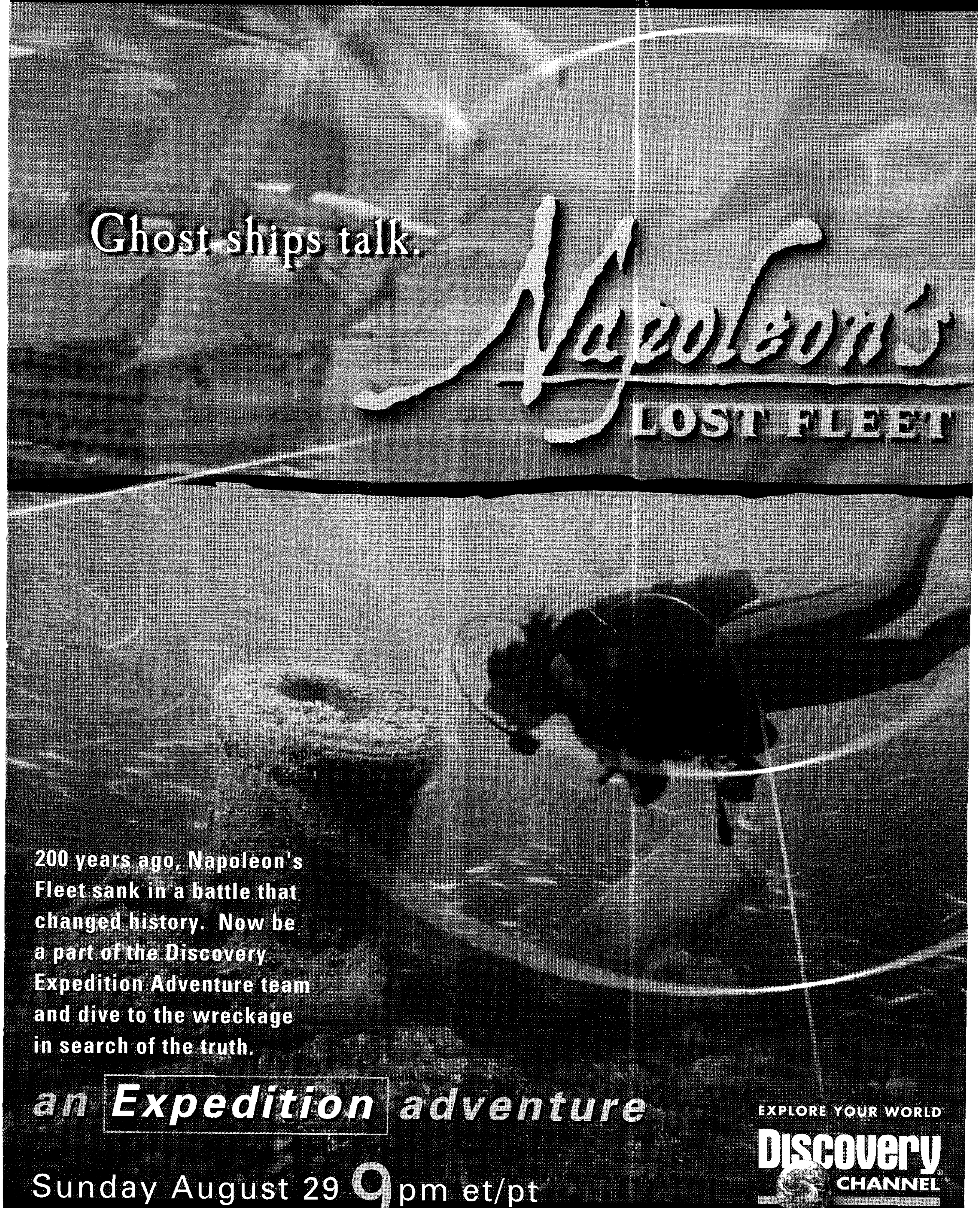

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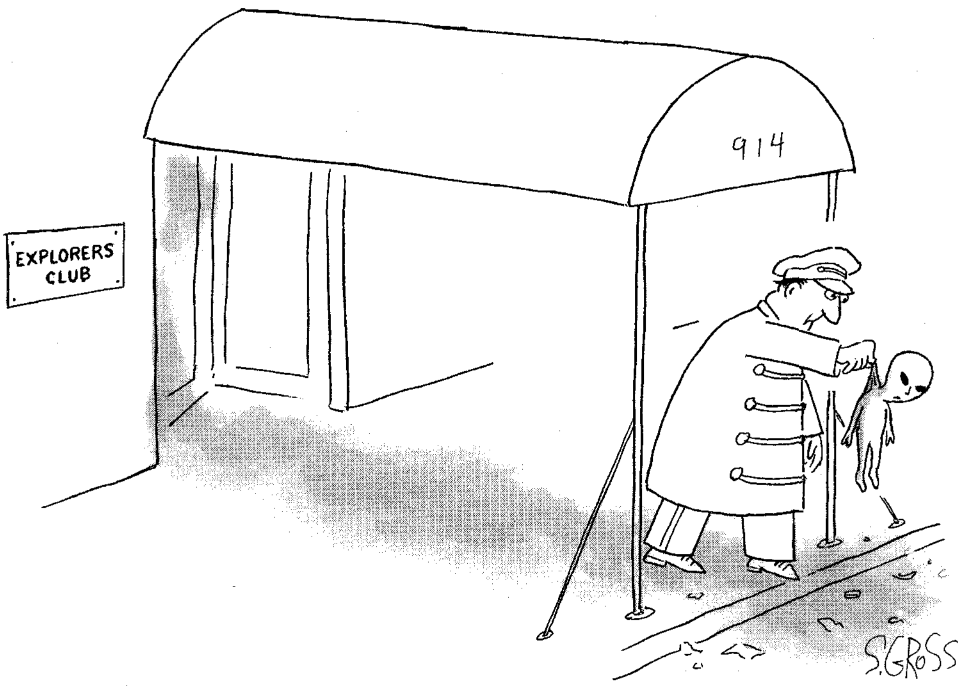

still. Salim was pressing on the gas pedal and turning the key in the ignition. The battery was working—the starter, too—but the engine emitted no sound. It was morning, and already light outside. He began searching around the cab for the lever that opens the hood. This struck me at once as odd and suspicious: a driver who doesn't know how to open the hood? Eventually, he figured out that the latches that needed to be released were on the outside. He then stood on a fender and began to inspect the engine, but he peered at its intricate construction as if he were seeing it for the first time. He would touch something, try to move it, but his gestures were those of an amateur. Every now and then, he would climb into the cab and turn the key in the ignition, but the engine remained dead silent. He located the toolbox, but there wasn't much in it. He pulled out a hammer, several wrenches, screwdrivers. Then he started to take the engine apart.

I STEPPED down from the cab. All around us was desert. Sand, with dark stones scattered about. Nearby, a large black oval rock. (In the hours following noon, after it had been warmed by the sun, it would radiate heat like a steel-mill oven.) A moonscape, delineated by a level horizon—the earth ends, and then there's nothing but sky and more sky. No hills. No dunes. Not a single leaf. And, of course, no water. Water! It's what instantly comes to mind in such circumstances. In the desert, the first thing a man sees when he opens his eyes in the morning is the face of his enemy—the flaming visage of the sun. The sight elicits in him a reflexive gesture of self-preservation: he reaches for water. Drink! Drink! Only by doing so can he ever so slightly improve his odds in the desert's eternal struggle—the desperate duel with the sun.

I resolved to look around for water, for I had none with me. I found nothing in the cab. But I did discover some: Attached with ropes to the bed of the truck, near the rear, underneath, were four goatskins, two on the left side and two on the right. The hides had been rather poorly cured, then sewed together in such a way that they retained the animal's shape. A goat's leg served as a drinking spout.

I sighed with relief, but only momentarily. I began to calculate. Without water, you can survive in the desert for twenty-four hours; with great difficulty, for forty-eight or so. The math is simple. Under these conditions, you secrete in one day approximately ten litres of sweat, and to survive you must drink a similar amount of water. Deprived of it, you will immediately start to feel thirsty. Genuine, prolonged thirst in a hot and dry climate is an exhausting, ravaging sensation, harder to control than hunger. After a few hours, you become lethargic and limp, weak and disoriented. Instead of speaking, you babble, ever less cogently. That same evening, or the next day, you get a high fever and quickly die.

If Salim doesn't share his water, I thought, I will die today. Even if he does, we will have only enough left for one more day—which means we will both die tomorrow, or the day after, at the latest.

Trying to stop these thoughts, I began to observe him closely. Covered with grease and sweating, Salim was still taking the engine apart, unscrewing screws and removing cables, but with no rhyme or reason, like a child furiously destroying a toy that won't work. On the fenders, on the bumper, lay countless springs, valves, compression rings, and wires; some had already fallen to the ground. I left him and went around to the other side of the truck, where there was still some shade. I sat down on the ground and leaned my back against the wheel.

Salim.

I knew nothing about the man who held my life in his hands. Or, at least, who held it for this one day. I thought, If Salim chases me away from the truck and the water—after all, he has a hammer in his hand and probably a knife in his pocket, and, on top of that, enjoys a significant physical advantage—if he orders me to leave and march off into the desert, I won't last even until nightfall. And it seemed to me that that was precisely what he might choose to do. He would thereby extend his life, after all—or, if help arrived in time, he might even save it.

Clearly Salim was not a professional driver, or, at any rate, not a driver of a Berliet truck. He also didn't know the area well. (On the other hand, can one really know the desert, where successive storms and tempests constantly alter the landscape, moving mountains of sand to ever-different sites and transposing

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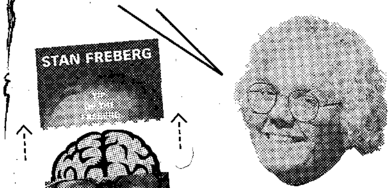

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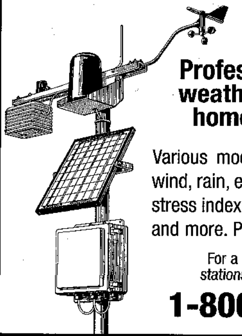

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the natural features?) It was common practice in these parts for someone—perhaps after a small financial windfall—to hire another person with less money to carry out his tasks for him. Maybe the rightful driver of this truck had hired Salim to take it in his stead. And in Mauritania no one will ever admit to not knowing or not being capable of something. If you approach a taxi-driver in the city, show him an address, and ask him if he knows where it is, he will say yes without a second's hesitation. And only later, when you are driving all over the city, round and round, do you fully realize that he has no idea where to go.

THE sun was climbing higher. The desert, that motionless, petrified ocean, absorbed its rays, grew hotter, and began to burn. The Yoruba are said to believe that if a man's shadow abandons him he will die. All the shadows were beginning to shrink, dwindle, fade. The dread afternoon hours were almost upon us—the time of day when people and objects have no shade, exist and yet do not exist, reduced to a glowing, incandescent whiteness.

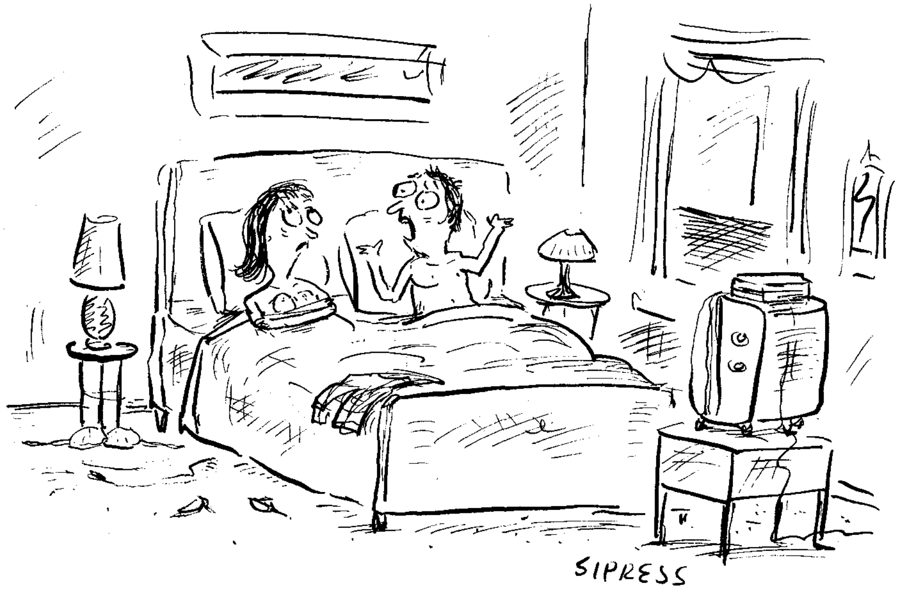
I thought that this moment had arrived, but suddenly I noticed before me an utterly different sight. The lifeless, still horizon—so crushed by the heat that it seemed nothing could ever issue forth from it—all at once sprang to life and became green. As far as the eye could see stood tall, magnificent palm trees, entire groves of them along the horizon, growing thickly, without interruption. I also saw lakes—yes, enormous blue lakes, with animated, undulating surfaces. Gorgeous shrubs grew there, with wide-spreading branches of a fresh, intense, succulent deep green. All this shimmered continuously, sparkled, pulsated—as if it were wreathed in a light mist, soft-edged and elusive.

"Salim!" I called. "Salim!"

A head emerged from under the hood. He looked at me.

"Salim!" I repeated once more, and pointed.

Salim glanced where I had shown him, unimpressed. In my dirty, sweaty face he must have read wonder, bewilderment, and rapture—and something else besides, which clearly alarmed him, for he walked up to the side of the truck, untied one of the goatskins, took a few sips, and wordlessly handed me the rest. I grabbed the rough leather sack and began to drink. Suddenly dizzy, I leaned my shoulder against the truck bed so as not to fall. I drank and drank, sucking fiercely on the goat's leg and still staring at the horizon. But as I felt my thirst subsiding, and the madness within me dying down, the green vista began to vanish. Its colors paled, its contours blurred. By the time I had emptied the goatskin, the horizon was once again flat, empty, and lifeless. The water, disgusting Saharan water—warm, dirty,



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thick with sand and sludge—extended my life but took away my vision of paradise. The crucial thing, though, was the fact that Salim himself had given me the water to drink. I stopped being afraid of him. I felt that I was safe—if only until we were down to our last sip.

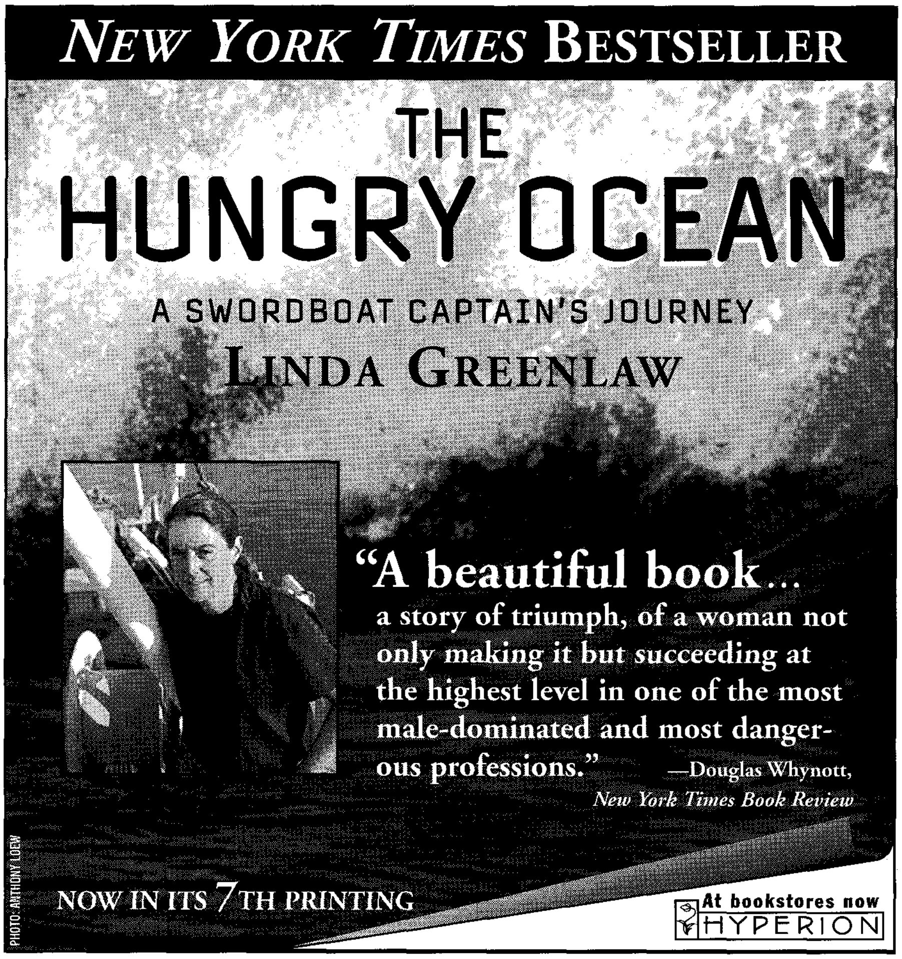
WE spent the second half of the day lying underneath the truck, in its faint, bleached shade. In this world circled all about with flaming horizons, Salim and I were the only life. I inspected the ground within my arm's reach, the nearest stones, searching for some living thing, anything that might twitch, move, slither. I remembered that somewhere in the Sahara there lives a small beetle that the Tuareg call Ngubi. When it is very hot, according to legend, Ngubi is tormented by thirst, desperate to drink. Unfortunately, there is no water anywhere, and only burning sand all around. So the small beetle chooses an incline—this can be a sloping fold of sand—and with determination begins to climb to its summit. It is an enormous effort, a Sisyphean task, because the hot and loose sand constantly gives way, carrying the beetle down with it, right back to where he began his toils. Which is why, before long, the beetle starts to sweat. A drop of moisture collects at the end of his abdomen, and swells. Then Ngubi stops climbing, curls up, and plunges his mouth into that very bead.

He drinks.

SALIM has several biscuits in a paper bag. We drink the second goatskin of water. Two remain. I consider writing something. (It occurs to me that this is often done at such moments.) But I don't have the strength. I'm not really in pain. It's just that everything is becoming empty. And within this emptiness another one is growing.

Then, in the darkness, two glaring lights. They are far away and move about violently. Soon the sound of a motor draws near, and I see the truck, hear voices in a language I do not understand. "Salim!" I say. Several dark faces, resembling his, lean over me. ♦

(Translated, from the Polish, by Klara Glowczewska.)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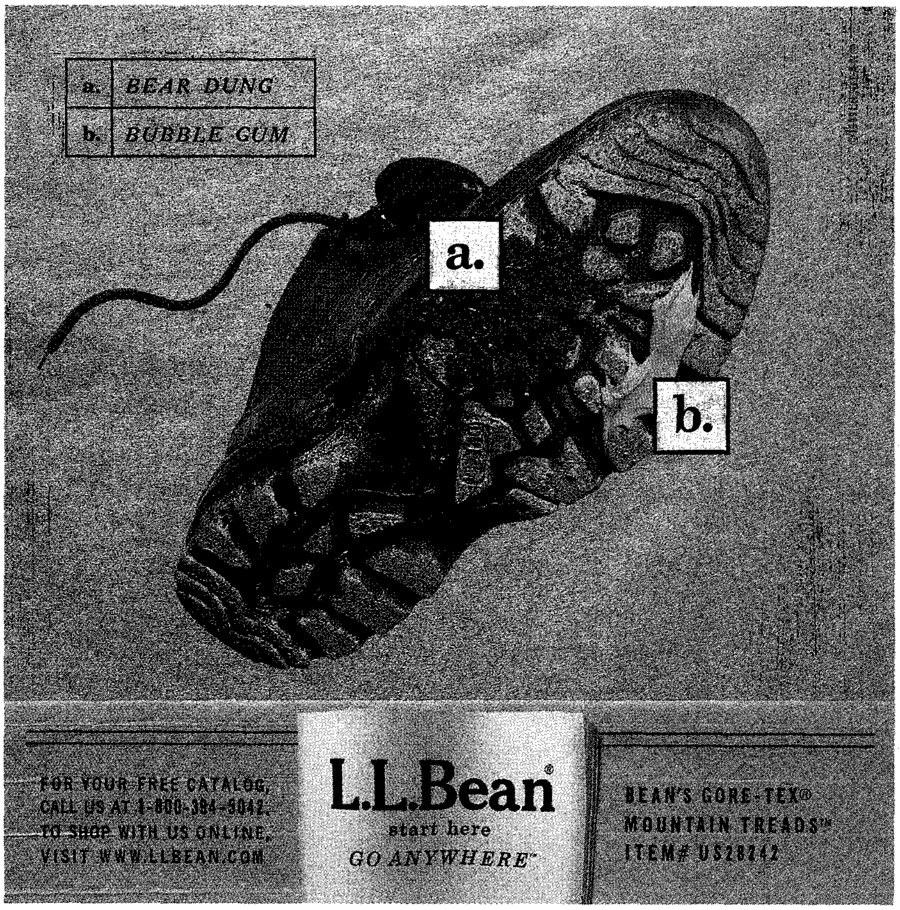

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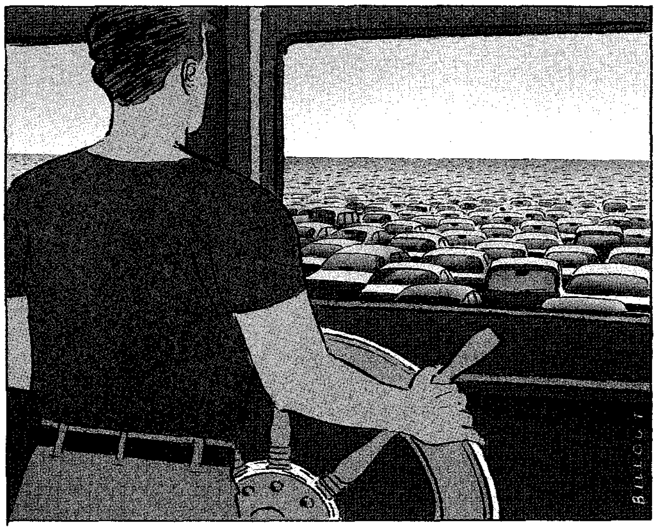
SHOUTS & MURMURS

ENDURANCE

BY BRUCE McCALL



FRIDAY, **2:46 P.M.** Overcast and muggy. We are well away at last, heading due east at 40°44' N, 73°56' W. All in high spirits, having transited the Midtown Tunnel in twelve minutes and saved a further quarter hour with E-Z Pass. God willing, we shall have the Southampton water tower in sight by sunset.

• **3:07 P.M.** Giant gasworks sighted to port and Hurley is half an hour photographing it. Then Sparks must needs find a rest room, costing another half hour. (I thought I had called for strong-bladdered men!) But Bones is confident we can make up the lost time on the Southern State.

• **4:09 P.M.** Crew becoming restless, grumbling that we have barely moved in an hour. I begin singing "Ninety-nine Bottles of Beer on the Wall," to cheer them up, but few join in. I dare not, amidst this dolor, disclose that Bones has overshot the Southern State, and we must now either double back or chart a new course.

• **4:15 P.M.** Flat tyre! Secretly I am grateful, as it gets the men busy again and out of their "funk." All hands must bestir themselves to unload our store and duffel, whilst Sparks searches for the jack. They are fine fellows withal, and once we are under way again I order up Ring Dings for every man.

• **4:45 P.M.** Estimated position somewhere west of Hicksville. Headway, four m.p.h. in light rain. Only now does Blades disclose that the Discover card has been left behind. We must rely on cash. Every man must turn out his pockets. Mad scramble among seat cushions, under seats, etc., for coins. We have enough for five gallons of Regular and a Big Mac for every man. It will be a near run thing.

• **5:08 P.M.** Blades calculates that we are somewhere near Ronkonkoma! We are unlikely, at this pace, to see Southampton until well after supper. I debate using up precious remaining cell-phone battery power to cancel the reservation, and decide against it; it would unnerve the men. As it is, Blades has had to be pulled back aboard after his mad attempt to climb out and get at the windshield-washer reservoir under the hood. He had secretly eaten an entire bag of chips and is half-crazed with thirst. Sparks needs a rest room again, the dogs are hyperventilating, but I dare not stop and lose more time.

• **5:18 P.M.** Headway three m.p.h. Fuel getting low. Continuous bickering amongst the men over Soft Rock or Golden Oldies. I am forced to order the radio turned off.

• **5:55 P.M.** A tense silence obtains. All eyes on the fuel-gauge needle as it sinks to Reserve. Orders to jettison all beach equipment to lighten the load. Overeager but well-meaning Sparks throws out the briefcase with the McDonald's coupons in it. I recount the cash when the men's heads are turned by a blonde in a Camaro. Enough only for two Happy Meals and one small fries.

• **6:28 P.M.** Stopped dead on the Vets Memorial about half a mile south of L.I.E. At precisely 6:12 P.M., with a sudden loud *flappa-flappa-flappa*, the fan belt snaps. We have no spare. The cell-phone batteries are dead. Intolerably hot and humid, abominable hiking weather, but I shall proceed on foot, with Bones, to find help. With only a three-month-old *Economist* to sustain their spirits, the men must wait it out as best they can. It is desolate country, and I pray we succeed.

• **7:32 P.M.** Nectar of the gods! Bones has found a bullet-riddled can with a few drops of Bud still left in it. We have now trekked three miles, in a southwesterly direction, with no luck. Will Bones ever desist from singing "Ode to Billie Joe," over and over? Does the man know no other tune?

• **8:04 P.M.** Lights are sighted! Our straggling turns to a gallop!

• **8:18 P.M.** "Who the —— are youse?" No greeting has ever given me greater joy! The estimable Ronnie, of SidMel 24-Hour Towing—albeit, taking every banknote and coin in my purse—has agreed to mount a repair, refuelling, and rescue expedition forthwith. How the men will fall upon the two lukewarm cans of Diet Coke Ronnie has proffered!

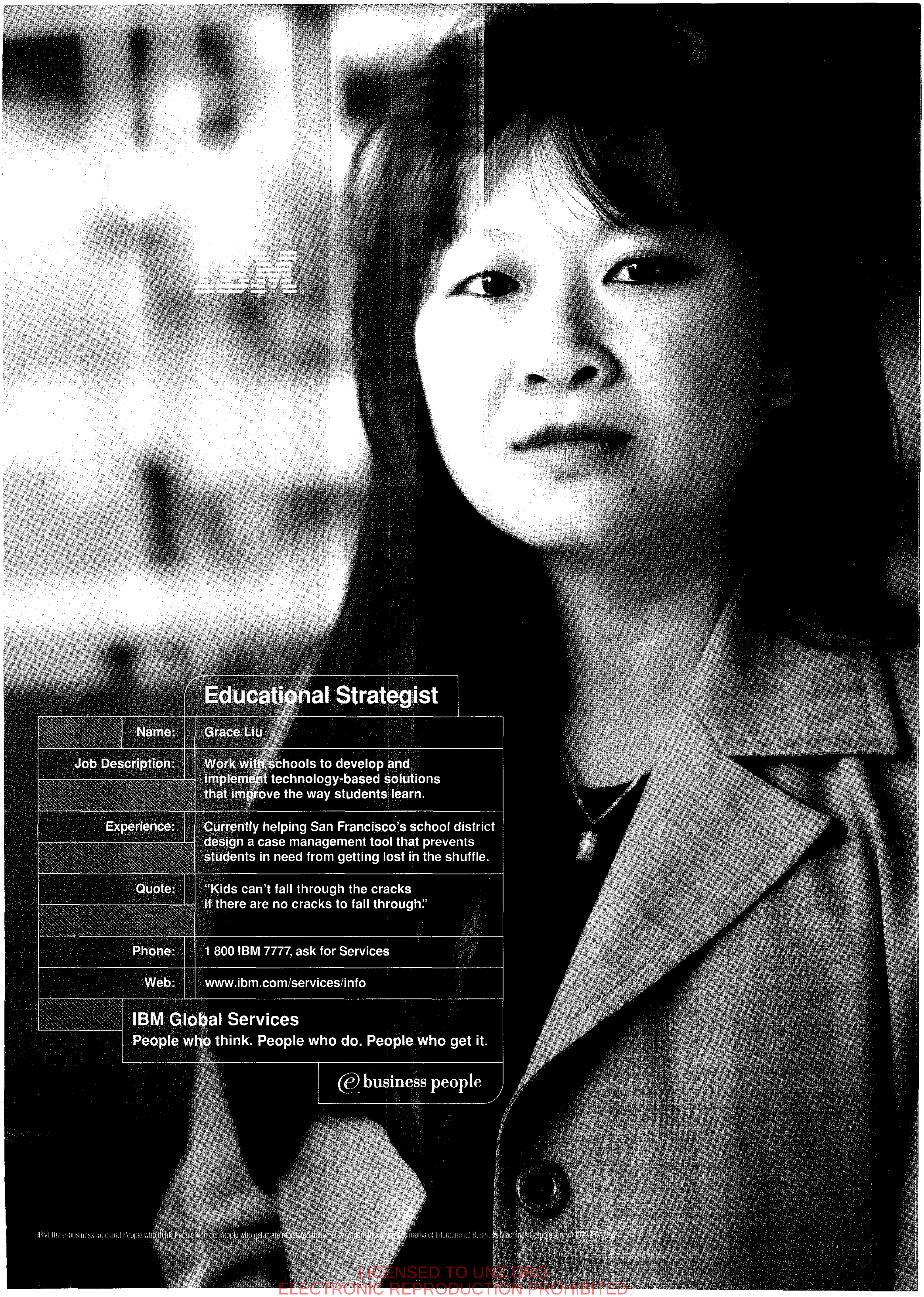
• **2:01 A.M.** We are at last preparing to start the journey back, after waiting for Ronnie to finish supper. He appears a very slow eater.

• **3:03 A.M.** Finally! A familiar shape hoves into view in the tow-truck lights. The men, struggling awake, give out a cheer, and then, patiently, each awaits his turn at the Diet Coke. (Much mirth at the uncontrolled burping.) Ronnie, for his part, now explains that he must impose a surcharge for mileage, which we pay in the novel currency of dogs. But gladly, for the expedition, doubtless given up for lost, shall soon be again under way!

• **4:42 A.M.** Estimated position, six miles east of Yaphank. No sleep for almost twenty-four hours, but I cannot yield to slumber's seductive embrace, now that our destination is all but within view.

• **4:59 A.M.** The compass plays tricks on the fatigued mind. Sparks confirms the worst: we are just outside of Bellport and heading due west toward Manhattan Island! I give orders to hook a U-ey and then lead the men in a rousing chorus of "Ninety-nine Bottles of Beer on the Wall." This time, all heartily join in. We shall, with God's grace, be at the Candy Kitchen in time for breakfast. ♦

GUY BILLOUT



Educational Strategist

Name:	Grace Liu
Job Description:	Work with schools to develop and implement technology-based solutions that improve the way students learn.
Experience:	Currently helping San Francisco's school district design a case management tool that prevents students in need from getting lost in the shuffle.
Quote:	"Kids can't fall through the cracks if there are no cracks to fall through."
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OUR LOCAL CORRESPONDENTS

LIONS AND TIGERS AND BEARS

Camping out in Central Park.

BY BILL BUFORD

So I thought I'd spend the night in Central Park, and, having stuffed my small rucksack with a sleeping bag, a big bottle of mineral water, a map, and a toothbrush, I arrived one heavy, muggy Friday evening in July to do just that: to walk around until I got so tired that I'd curl up under a tree and drop off to a peaceful, outdoorsy sleep. Of course, anybody who knows anything about New York knows the city's essential platitude—that you don't wander around Central Park at night—and in that, needless to say, was the appeal: it was the thing you don't do. And, from what I can tell, it has always been the thing you don't do, ever since the Park's founding commissioners, nearly a hundred and fifty years ago, decided that the place should be closed at night—a decision heartily endorsed by its co-architect Frederick Law Olmsted, who said that once the Park was dark he'd "answer for no man's safety in it from bullies, garroters, or highway robbers." At the time, the commissioners were recovering from one of the Park's first fatalities: the result of a downtown lad's overturning his two-wheeler and snapping his neck in a brandy-inspired carriage race down the Mall. Most felons then were reckless carriage drivers. In modern times, they're distinctly more menacing, as Ogden Nash observed in 1961:

> If you should happen after dark
> To find yourself in Central Park,
> Ignore the paths that beckon you
> And hurry, hurry to the zoo,
> And creep into the tiger's lair.
> Frankly, you'll be safer there.

Even now, when every Park official, city administrator, and police officer tells us (correctly) that the Park is safe during the day, they all agree in this: only a fool goes there at night. Or a purse-snatcher, loon, prostitute, drug dealer, homophobic gay-basher, murderer—not to mention bully, garroter, highway robber.

I arrived at nine-fifteen and made for the only nocturnal spot I knew: the Delacorte Theatre. Tonight's show was "The Taming of the Shrew." "Bonny Kate," Petruchio was saying, "she is my goods, my chattel . . . my horse, my ox, my ass, my any thing." Lights out, applause, and the audience began exiting through the tunnels at the bottom of the bleachers. So far, so normal, and this could have been an outdoor summer-stock Shakespeare production anywhere in America, except in one respect: a police car had pulled up just as Petruchio began his soliloquy and was now parked conspicuously in view, its roof light slowly rotating. The police were there to reassure the audience that it was being protected; the rotating red light was like a campfire in the wild, warning what's out there to stay away.

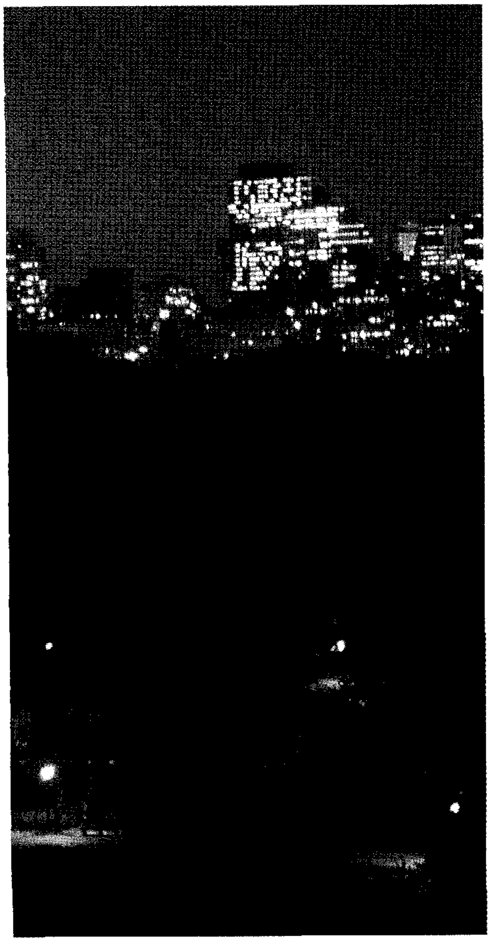
The Park has had its own police precinct since the end of the nineteenth century, and it is now staffed with what Police Commissioner Howard Safir, himself an evening-roller-blading Park enthusiast, describes as "people persons"—well-spoken, well-mannered policemen whose first task is to make visitors feel happy. And, on any normal visit, I, like anyone else, would actually be very happy to see one of the men in blue. But not tonight. It's against the law to spend the night in the Park, and at around eleven o'clock the police start their "sweep"—crisscrossing the place on foot and in unmarked cars, scooters, little three-wheeled vans, and helicopters.

During my first hour or so, I wandered around the Delacorte, reassured by the lights, the laughter, the lines of Shakespeare that drifted out into the summer night. I was feeling a certain exhilaration, the euphoria that comes from doing the thing you're not meant to be doing, climbing the steps of Belvedere Castle all alone, peeking through the windows of the Henry Luce Nature Observatory, identifying the herbs in the Shakespeare Garden, seeing no one, when, after turning this way and that, I was on a winding trail in

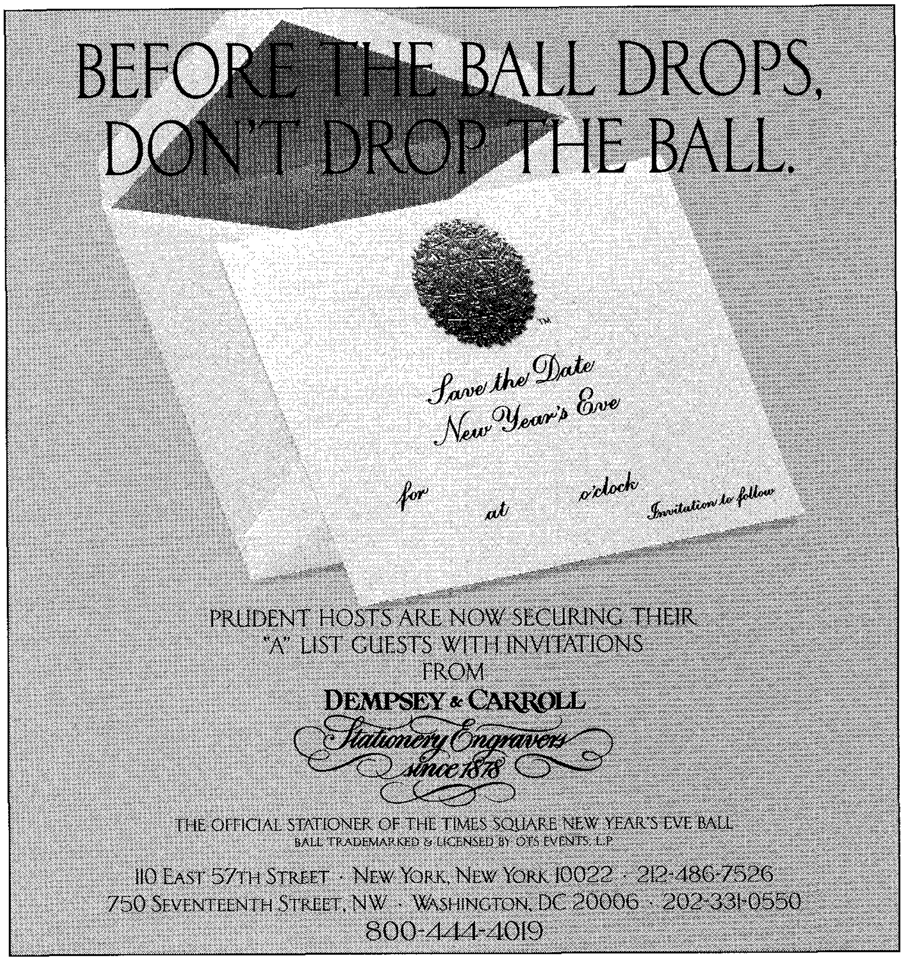
ALEX WEBB/MAGNUM

Only a fool goes there at night—or a purse-snatcher, loon, prostitute, drug dealer, impenetrable foliage, and, within minutes, I was lost.

There was a light ahead, and as I rounded the corner I came upon five men, all wearing white tank-top T-shirts, huddled around a bench. I walked past, avoiding eye contact, and turned down a path, a narrow one, black dark, going down a hill, getting darker, very dark. Is this a good idea? I asked myself, when, as if on cue, I heard a great shaking of the bushes beside me and froze. Animal? Mugger? Whatever I was hearing would surely stop making that noise, I thought. But it didn't. How can this be? I'm in the Park less than an hour and already I'm lost, on an unlighted path, facing an unknown thing shaking threateningly in the bushes. It was no small thing moving around in there, and, what's more, it was moving in my direction, and I thought, Shit! What *am* I doing here? And I bolted, not running, exactly, but no longer strolling—and certainly not looking back—turning left, turning right, all sense of direction obliterated, the crashing continuing behind me, louder even, *left*, another man in a tank-top T-shirt, *right*, another man, when finally



omophobic gay-basher, murderer, bully.



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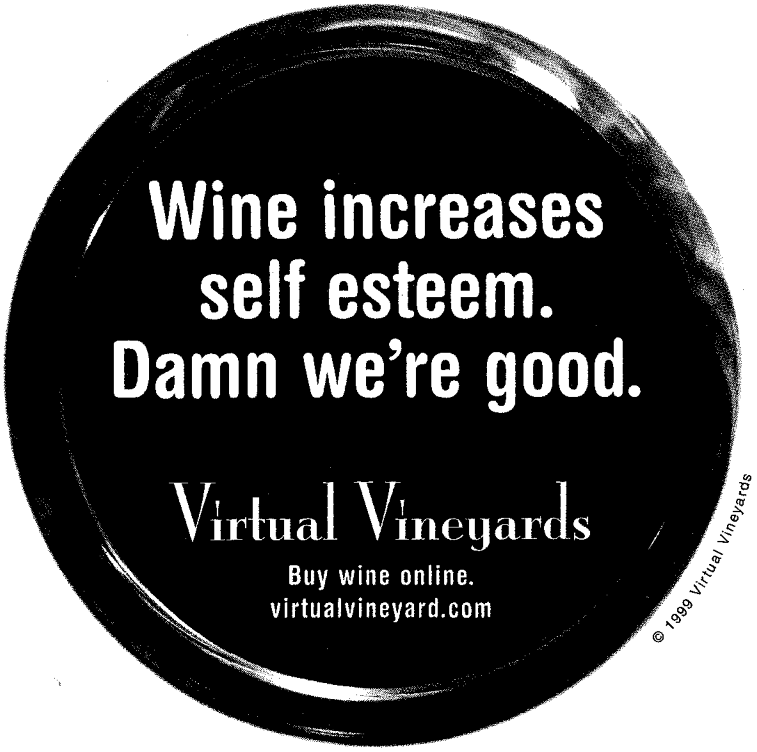

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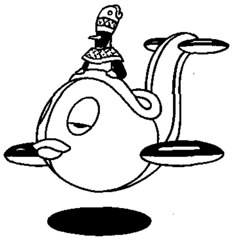
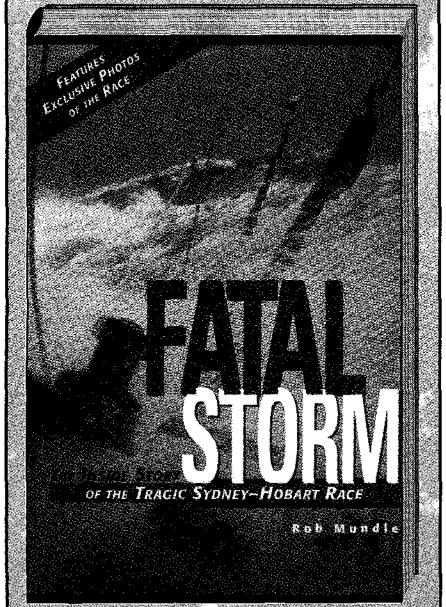
I realized where I was—in the Ramble, stupid, where I'd been only once before (and got lost)—as I turned left again, and there was a lake, and the skyline of Central Park South, the Essex House Hotel, and the reassuring sign for A&E's "Biography," announcing the temperature (82 degrees), the time (ten-fifteen), and tonight's "Biography" special (William Shatner). I stopped. I breathed. Relax, I told myself. It's only darkness.

About fifteen feet into the lake, there was a large boulder, with a heap of branches leading to it. I tiptoed across and sat, enjoying the picture of the city again, the very reassuring city. I looked around. There was a warm breeze, and heavy clouds overhead, but it was still hot, and I was sweating. Far out in the lake, there was a light—someone rowing a boat, a lantern suspended above the stern. I got my bearings—the twin towers of the San Remo in view, a penthouse all lit up, a party. I was on the West Side, around Seventy-seventh. People use the cross streets, imaginatively projecting them across the Park, like latitude lines, as a way of imposing a New York grid on this bit of New York gridlessness. The far side of the lake must be near Strawberry Fields, around Seventy-second. Just where that boat was now, I realized, was where, two years ago, the police had found the body of Michael McMorrow, a forty-four-year-old man (my age), who was stabbed thirty-four times by a fifteen-year-old. It was possible, the thought occurred to me, to chart my progress through the Park via its recent murders (I entered at East Seventy-second, where, two months ago, the police found the body of a publishing executive, inexplicably felled, the headphones of his Walkman still clamped to his ears, and later, as I headed for the Reservoir . . .), but no, this didn't seem like a fruitful way of organizing the evening. Even so, the menacing Central Park crime mystique lingered: the idea that here anything is possible. You enter the Park, you have sex in the bushes with a stranger, you leave. No memory, no trace. You find someone all alone, you rob him, you disappear. Unseen transgressions. After McMorrow was killed, he was disembowelled, his intestines ripped out so that his body would sink when rolled into the lake—a detail that I've compulsively reviewed in my mind since I first heard it. And then his killers, with time on their hands and no witnesses, just went home. Another feature of a Central Park crime: no one knows you're here.



ONE of the first events in the Park took place a hundred and forty years ago almost to the day: a band concert. The concert, pointedly, was held on a Saturday, still a working day, because the concert, like much of the Park then, was designed to keep the city's rougher elements out. The Park at night must have seemed luxurious and secluded—a giant evening garden party. There were no other entertainments. No rides, no playgrounds, no venders. The Park was to be strolled through, enjoyed as an aesthetic experience, like a walk inside a painting. George Templeton Strong, the indefatigable diarist, was an early Park user. On his first visit, on June 11, 1859, the place was a desolate landscape of mounds of compost and lakes without water. But even at that stage Strong recognized that the architects were building two different parks at once. One was the Romantic park, which included the Ramble, the thirty-seven-acre, carefully "designed" wilderness, wild nature re-created in the middle of the city, *rus in urbe*, an English notion—nature as surprising and unpredictable. The other, the southern end of the Park, was more French: ordered, and characterized by straight lines. Strong was unhappy with the straight lines, and could see that once the stunted elms were fully grown ("by A.D. 1950," he wrote) the place would look distinctly "Versailles-y." But by 1860 this section was tremendously popular, and paintings show a traffic jam of fancy carriages, all proceeding the wrong way up Fifth Avenue—"a broad torrent of vehicular gentility wherein profits shoddy and of petroleum were largely represented," Strong wrote in disgust.

I climbed back down from the rock. In the distance, I spotted a couple approaching. An uncomfortable thing: someone else in the Park. Your first thought is: nutcase? But then I noticed, even from a hundred feet, that the couple was panicking: the man was pulling the woman to the other side of him, so that he would be between her and me when we passed. The woman stopped, and the man jerked her forward authoritatively, and there was a muted exchange. I was surprised by how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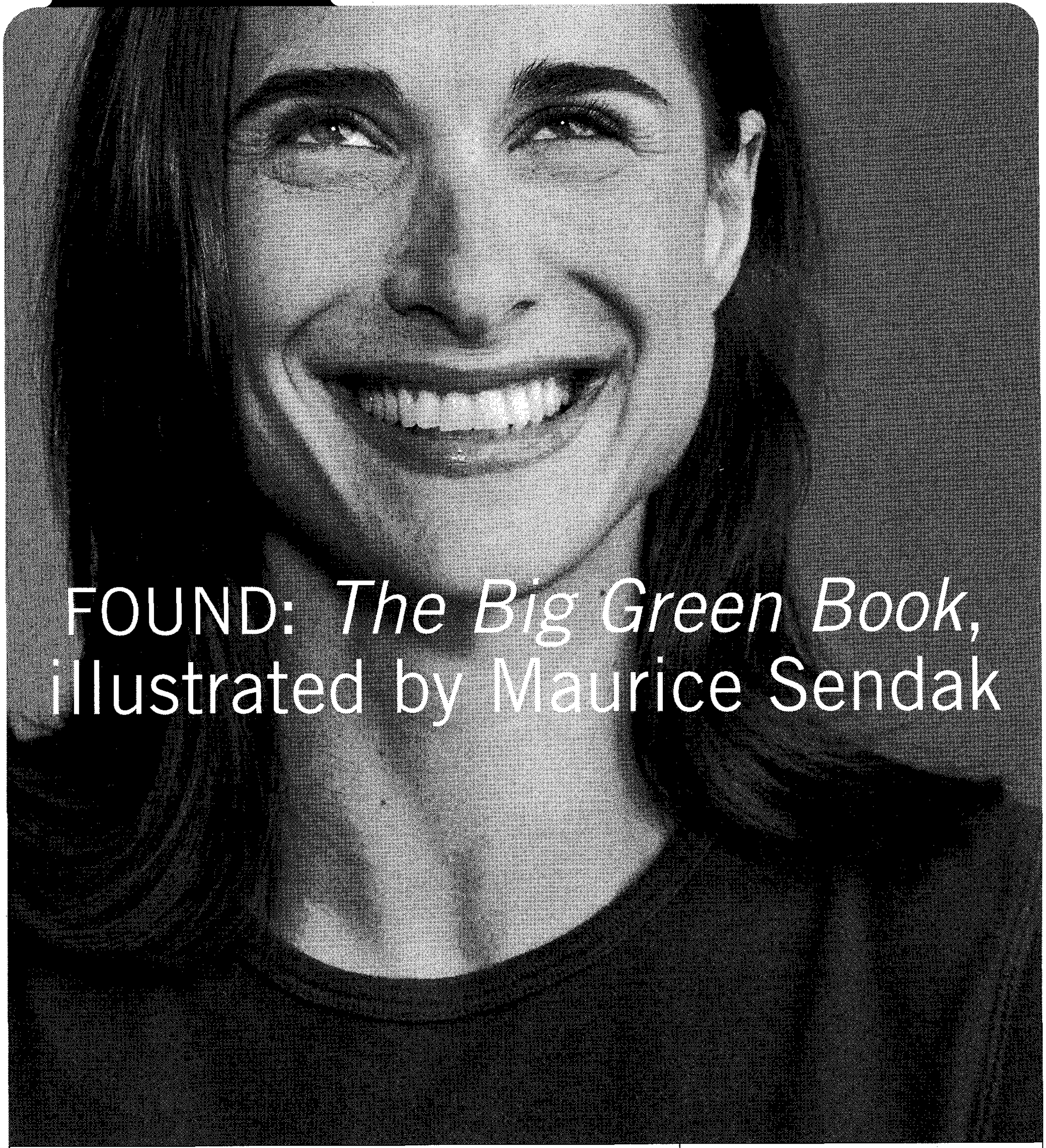
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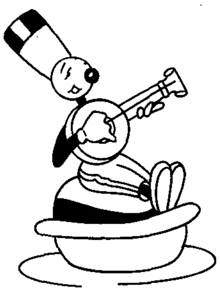
expressive their fear was—even in the way they were moving. As they got closer, I could see that he was tall and skinny, wearing a plaid shirt and black horn-rimmed glasses; she was a blonde, and looked determinedly at the ground, her face rigid. Both of them were now walking fast and stiffly. When they were within a few feet of me, he reached out and grabbed her arm. I couldn't resist: just as we were about to pass each other, I addressed them, forthrightly: "Hello, good people!" I said. "And how are you on this fine summer evening?" At first, silence, and then the woman started shrieking uncontrollably—"Oh, my God! Oh, my God!"—and they hurried away.



This was an interesting discovery. One of the most frightening things in the Park at night was a man on his own. One of the most frightening things tonight was me. I was emboldened by the realization, newly confident: I was no longer afraid; I was frightening. Another man approached, big and fat, wearing only shorts, with blubbery tits hanging over his swollen belly. Ah, well, I thought, someone who really is insane. No matter. I greeted him. He was very friendly. He had an aluminum container of food, and he was eating as he walked. He offered me some.

"What is it?" I asked.

"Pasta," he said. "Mmm, mmm. Would you like a bite?"

"No, thanks," I said. "I've eaten."

"You sure?" he said. "I got plenty."

"No, really," I said. "That's very kind, but I couldn't."

NOT everyone likes the Park, but just about everyone feels he should. This was at the heart of Henry James's otherwise impressively incomprehensible observations when he visited the Park, in 1904. The Park, in James's eyes, was a failure. All the fake nature stuff, got up to be so many wild scenes, was not unlike "the effect of those old quaint prints which give in a single view the classic, gothic and other architectural wonders of the world." The Park was too narrow, and too short, and was overwhelmed by an obligation to "do." The most remarkable thing about it was simply that it existed, and any person who didn't, as James put it, "keep patting the Park on the back" was guilty of being seen as a social ingrate. By then, the Park's founders had died, and the Park, no longer the domain of the privileged, had been taken over by immigrants—a "polyglot Hebraic crowd of pedestrians," in James's inelegantly revealing phrase. In fact, between James's visit and the nineteen-thirties, the Park might well have been at its most popular, visited by more people than today, when current estimates put the number of visitors somewhere between ten and twenty million a year. The Park in fact was being destroyed by overuse, until 1934, when the legendary Robert Moses, genius urban impresario and civic fascist, was appointed Parks Commissioner. Moses was responsible for the third design element in the Park—neither English nor French, neither Romantic nor classical, but efficient, purposeful, and unapologetically American. All that arty pretend-you're-in-a-painting-of-the-Hudson-River-School: he had no time for it. He wanted baseball diamonds, shuffleboard, volleyball, and swimming pools. He closed the Casino—originally the tea salon of the Park's other architect, Calvert Vaux, but by the nineteen-thirties a dubious if highly charismatic speakeasy of jazz, celebrities, and corrupt glamour—and replaced it, characteristically, with a playground. Even the Ramble became a target: Moses tried to chop it down and install a fourteen-acre senior citizens' recreation center. He was blocked by the protesting bird-watchers—one of the few times Moses was stopped. The irony was that by the end of the Moses era the Park—no longer a piece of nature but a piece of property, a venue for recreation, not conservation—was dangerous.

IN my new confidence I set out for the northern end of the Park. Near the reservoir, a gang of kids on bicycles zoomed across the Eighty-fifth Street Transverse, hooting with a sense of ominous power. A little later, there was another gang, this one on foot—about a dozen black kids, moving eastward, just by the running track. I kept my head down and picked up my pace, but my mind involuntarily called up the memory of the 1989 "wilding" incident, in which a young investment banker was beaten and sexually assaulted by a group of kids on a rampage.

Around Ninety-fifth Street, I found a bench and stopped. I had taken one of the trails that run alongside the Park's West Drive, and the more northern apartments of Central Park West were in view. I sat as residents prepared for bed: someone watching television, a woman doing yoga, a man stepping into the shower. Who needs curtains when it's only the Park outside your window? Below me was the city, the top of the Empire State Building peeking over the skyline. George Templeton Strong discovered the beauty of Central Park at night on July 30, 1869, on a "starlit drive" with his wife. But what Strong saw was different from what I was looking at. The Park was darker then than now, genuinely empty, and something much closer to Olmsted's nature in the seeming wild. And, of course, you could see the stars. Tonight, even if it weren't clouding over, there'd be no stars. Too much glare. The Park is now framed, enveloped even, by the city in a way that Olmsted never imagined, but there was no escaping the recognition that this city—contrived, man-made, glaringly obtrusive, consuming wasteful and staggering quantities of electricity and water and energy—was very beautiful. I'm not sure why it should be so beautiful; I don't have the vocabulary to describe its appeal. But there it was: the city at night, viewed from what was meant to be an escape from it, shimmering.

Olmsted's son, also a landscape architect, was offended by the tall buildings that had begun crowding round his father's achievement. It was ruinous, the son said, "ugly, restless, and distressing," and there was talk of limiting the height of what greedy real-estate developers could build. Young Olmsted did not understand the romance of what was taking form.

A policeman appeared. It was after midnight, and I thought that my visit was now terminated. But he could see that I was enjoying the view, so he found a bench not far away. He had a shaved head and a mild manner. He said nothing and took in the view himself. And that was what we did, sitting together, separated by twenty or thirty feet, in silence, for ten minutes, saying nothing, until finally I felt I could get up, and said good night, and resumed my journey.

I WALKED around the Harlem Meer, busy even at one in the morning—couples on benches, young men hunched over their girlfriends like question marks. From the hill of Fort Clinton, where the British drove Washington's troops north and took temporary possession of Man-

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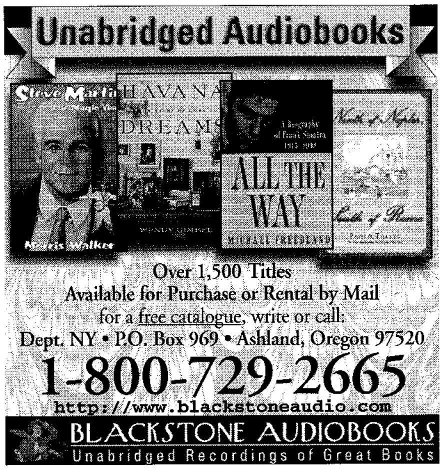
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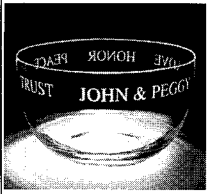

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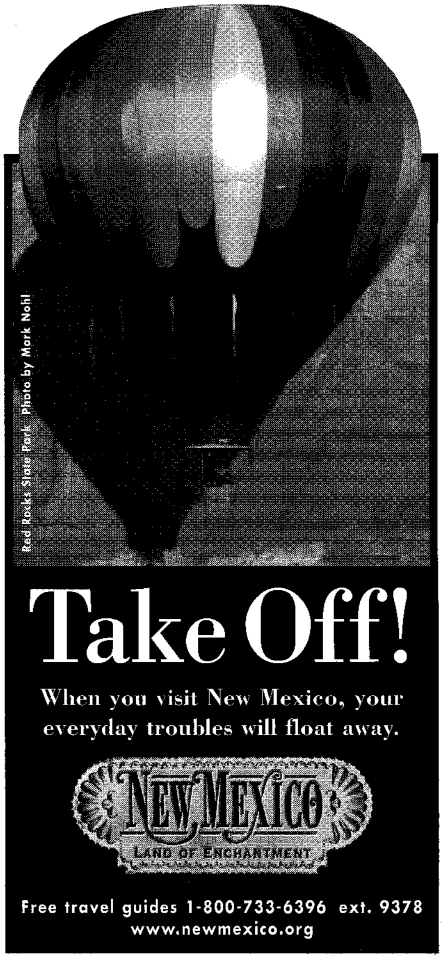
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hattan, I watched a slow seduction. I walked and walked. Around one-thirty, I entered the North Woods, and made my way down to what my map would later tell me was a stream called the Loch. The stream was loud, sounding more like a river than a stream. And for the first time that night the city disappeared: no buildings, no lights, no sirens.

I was tired. I had been walking for a long time. I wanted to unroll my sleeping bag, out of view of the police, and fall asleep. I was looking forward to dawn and being awakened by birds.

I made my way down a ravine. A dirt trail appeared on my left. This looked promising. I followed it, and it wound its way down to the stream. I looked back: I couldn't see the trail; it was blocked by trees. This was good. Secluded. I walked on. It flattened out and I could put a sleeping bag here. This was good, too. Yes: good. There were fireflies, even at this hour, and the place was so dark and so densely shrouded by the trees overhead that the light of the fireflies was hugely magnified; their abdomens pulsed like great yellow flashlights. There was also a smell: a dampness, a kind of rotting fecundity. And the stream was very loud: this was the sound of nature, true, but it was all a bit too incongruous. Olmsted or not, I knew I was in Harlem.

I spotted a white article on the ground. I stared at it for a while before walking over to pick it up. It was a woman's blouse. Of course. A woman had simply left it behind. Fifty yards from here, a Brazilian jogger was killed—the murderer never found. (A week later, a woman would be murdered nearby, at the Blockhouse, at this very hour, her screams ignored by a resident who heard them. When I returned here, at midnight two nights after that killing, I, too, would hear a woman's screams—spooky, bleating screams, which I then reported to a policeman, startling him in the dark where I tracked him down.)

I eventually rolled out my sleeping bag atop a little rise beside the bridle path by the North Meadow, and then I sat, cross-legged, and asked myself questions: Why did I bring a little airline tube of toothpaste but no flashlight? Why didn't I bring a cell phone? Wouldn't a can of Mace have been prudent? I crawled inside my bag and closed my eyes. And then: snap! A tremendous cracking sound. I froze, then quickly whipped round to have a look: nothing. A forest is always full of noises. How did I manage to camp out as a kid? Finally, I fell asleep.

I know I fell asleep because I was awake again. Another branch snapping, but this sound was different—as if I could hear the tissue of the wood tearing. My eyes still closed, I was motionless. Another branch, and then a rustling of leaves. No doubt: someone was there. I could tell I was being stared at; I could feel the staring. I heard breathing.

I opened my eyes and was astonished by what I saw. I was surrounded by—what? Something. There were three of them, all within arm's reach. They looked very big. At first I didn't know what they were, except that they were animals. The only animal I'd seen in the Park was a rat. These were not rats—that was my first thought. Actually, that was my second thought; my first was: This is not the police. Maybe they were bears, small ones. Then I realized; they were—what do you call them? Those animals that Daniel Boone made his hat out of.

They weren't moving; I wasn't moving. They just stared, brown eyes looking blankly into my own. They were obviously very perplexed to find me here. Suddenly, I was very perplexed to find me here, too. "Imagine this," one of them seemed to be saying. "A grown man sleeping out in Central Park!"

"Obviously, not from New York."

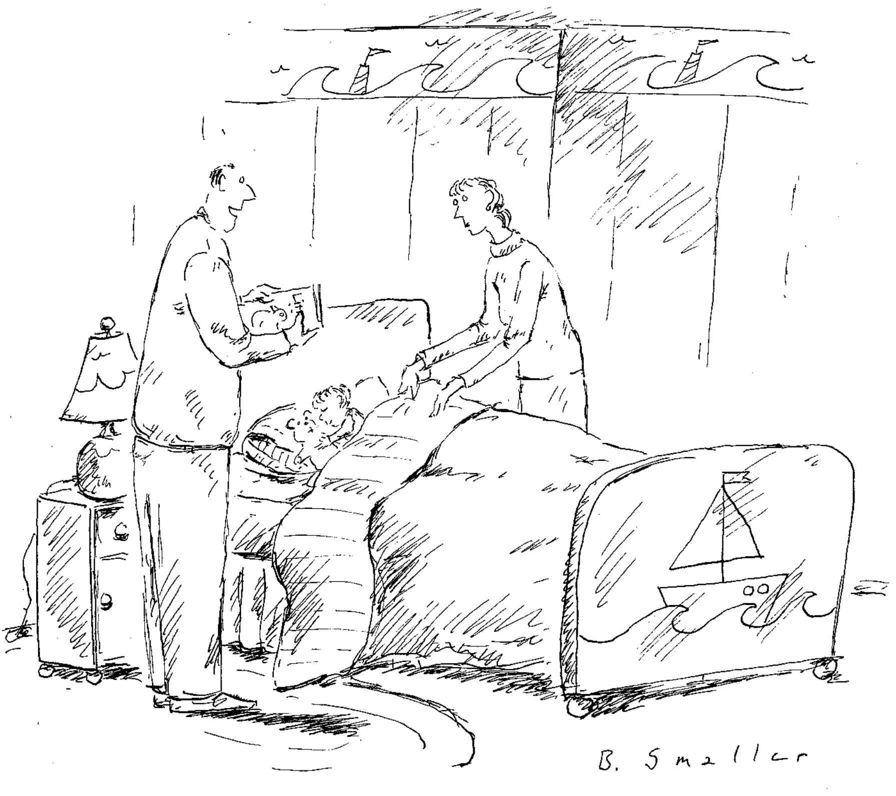
"Hi, guys," I muttered. I said this very softly.

My voice startled them and they scurried up the tree in front of me. But only ten feet up. Then they stopped and resumed staring. And then, very slowly, they inched a little farther up. What should I do? If I ignored them and fell asleep, I faced the prospect of their coming down again. On the other hand, why would I want to frighten them? Besides, what if I frightened them and they *didn't* leave? After all, I was now in their way. They inched a little farther. They were about forty feet up, directly above me now, and the tree was swaying slightly with their weight.

It was starting to drizzle. I heard a helicopter, its searchlight crisscrossing the bridle path only ten feet away. So maybe there were bad guys.

I looked back at the raccoons. "Are there bad guys here?" I asked them. It was stupid to speak. My voice startled them and, directly overhead, one of them started peeing. And then, nature finding herself unable to resist, it started to pour.

But not for long. The rain stopped. The raccoons stared. And I fell asleep. I know I fell asleep because the next thing I heard were birds. A natural, naturally beautiful sound. ♦



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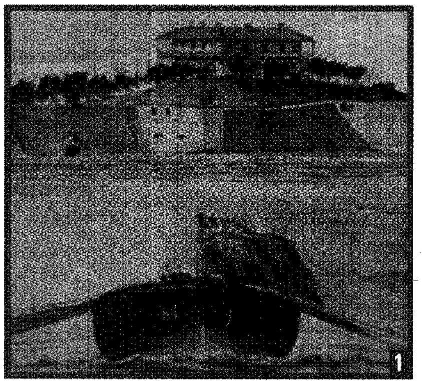

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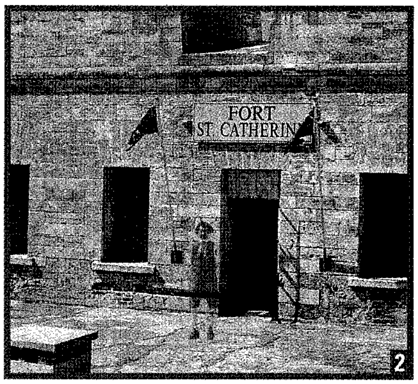

Situated atop a cliff overlooking the sands where settlers first set foot on the island, Fort St. Catherine is the oldest fort in Bermuda. Built in 1614, the fort features a series of historic dioramas as well as artillery and weaponry. You can even glimpse replicas of England's crown jewels in the fort's museum.

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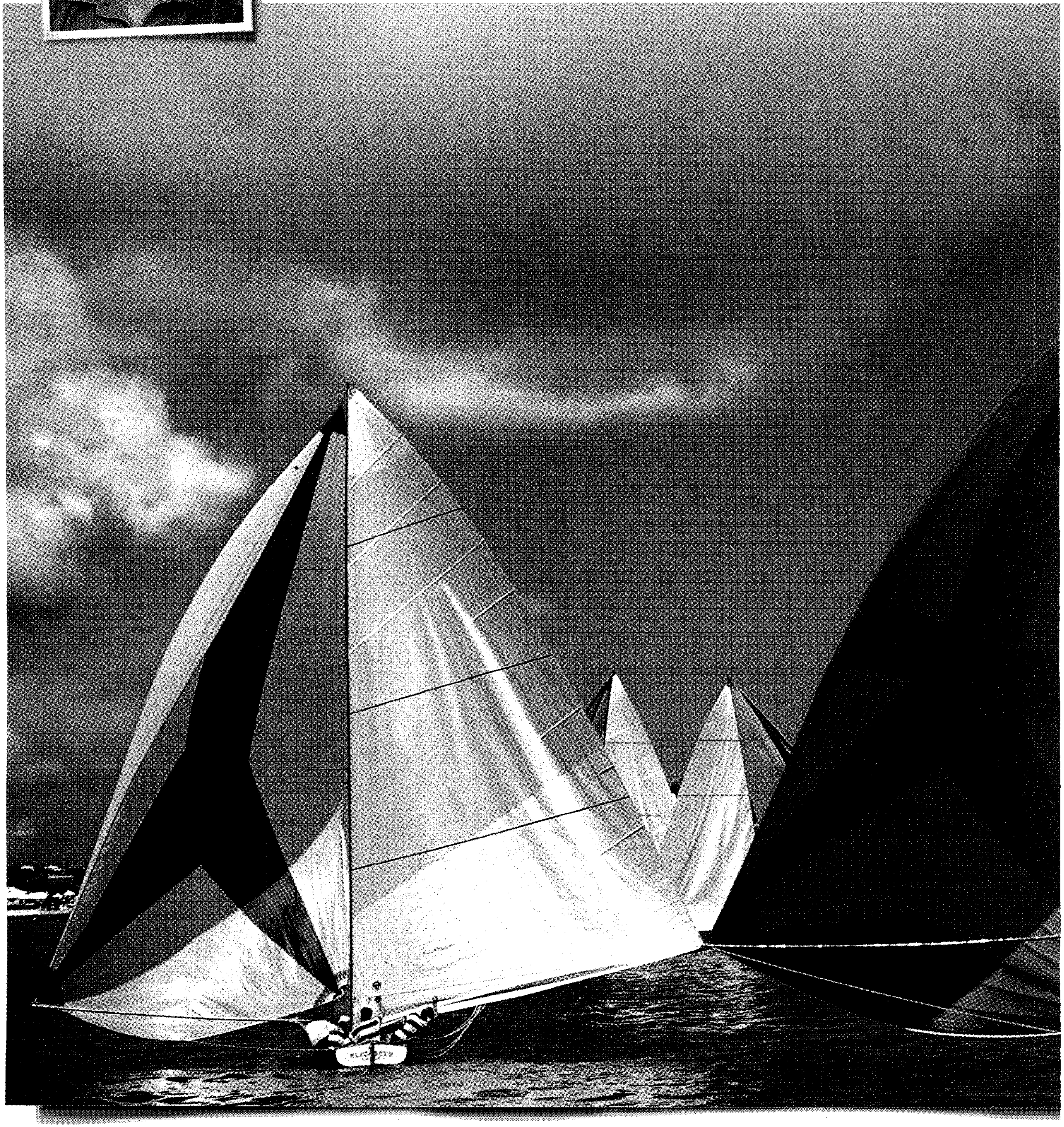

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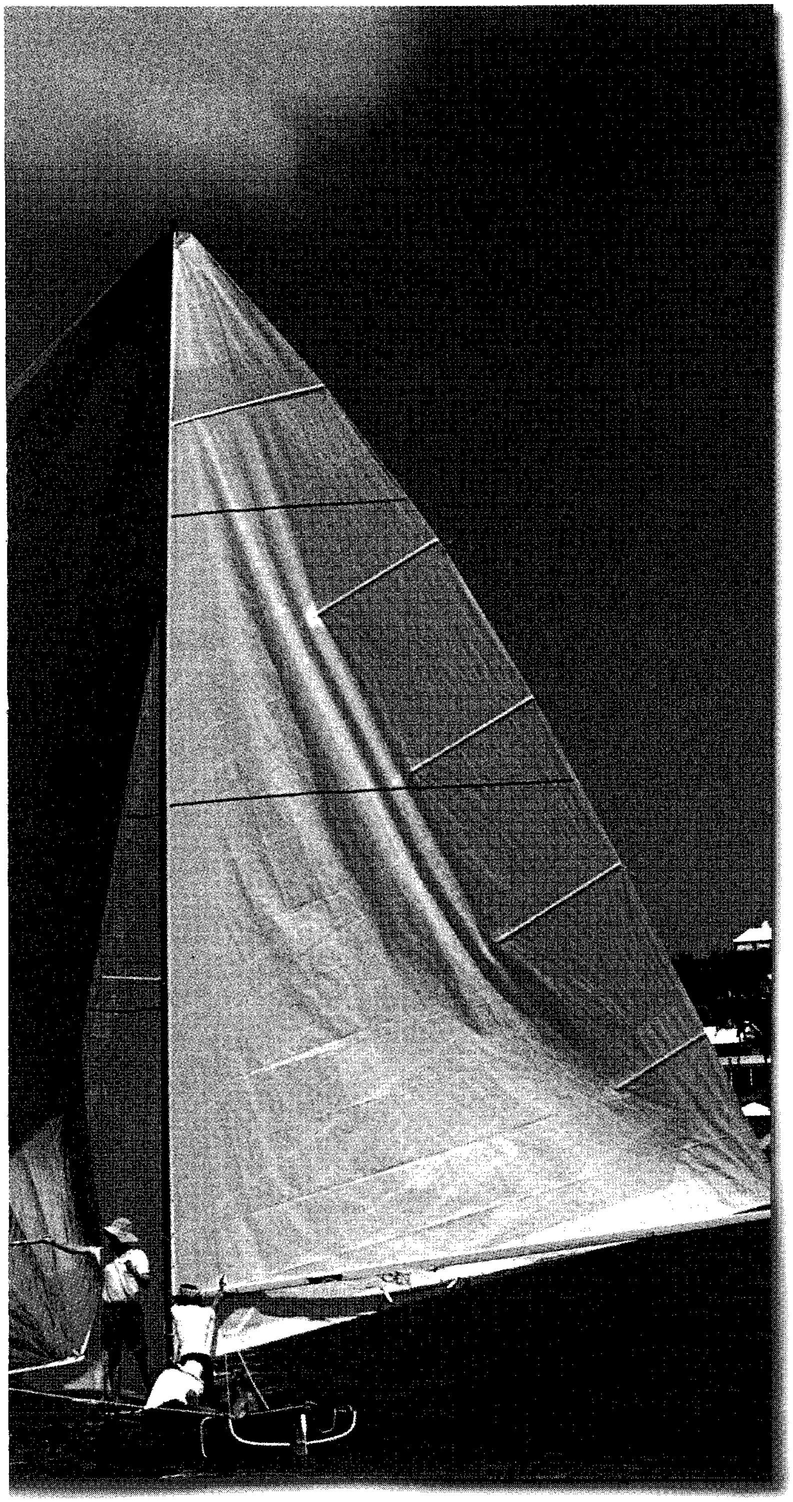

Bermudian dinghy races include all the pageantry and tradition of classical regattas but they're a heck of a lot more fun. The sails, being inappropriately large, cause the dinghies to tip over quite frequently. And when there's no wind, crewmembers are routinely thrown overboard to pick up speed. But don't worry. They're quickly picked up by spectator boats and given rum swizzles for their troubles.

Bermudians themselves are an odd but charming mix. They enjoy things like cricket and high tea in the afternoon. On the other hand, they wear shorts to the office and like to dance in the streets with colorful Gombey dancers.

So don't let the veneer of tradition and formality fool you. Bermuda's a hell of a good time. In fact, many of the locals will tell you they could never imagine leaving. And given the questionable seaworthiness of the dinghies, that's probably a good thing. To book a vacation call your travel agent or 1-800-BERMUDA.

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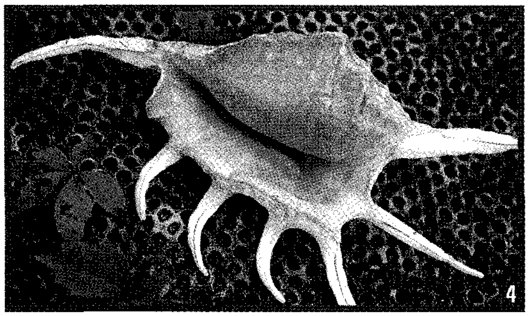

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Housed in the fabled Globe Hotel, the Bermuda National Trust Museum offers an historical overview of the island. The "Rogues and Runners" exhibit captures the danger and excitement of the era when Bermuda was the commercial center for Confederate blockade runners during the American Civil War. The Bermuda National Trust is devoted to preserving the architectural heritage of the island. Two elegant homes showcase their efforts: Tucker House and Verdmont House.

BERMUDA NATIONAL GALLERY

Browse works of yesterday and today at the island's acclaimed art museum in the heart of Hamilton. European painting and African sculpture comprise much of the collection housed in the City Hall and Arts Centre. New exhibits throughout the year run the gamut from Pop Art and American Impressionism to works by local artists.

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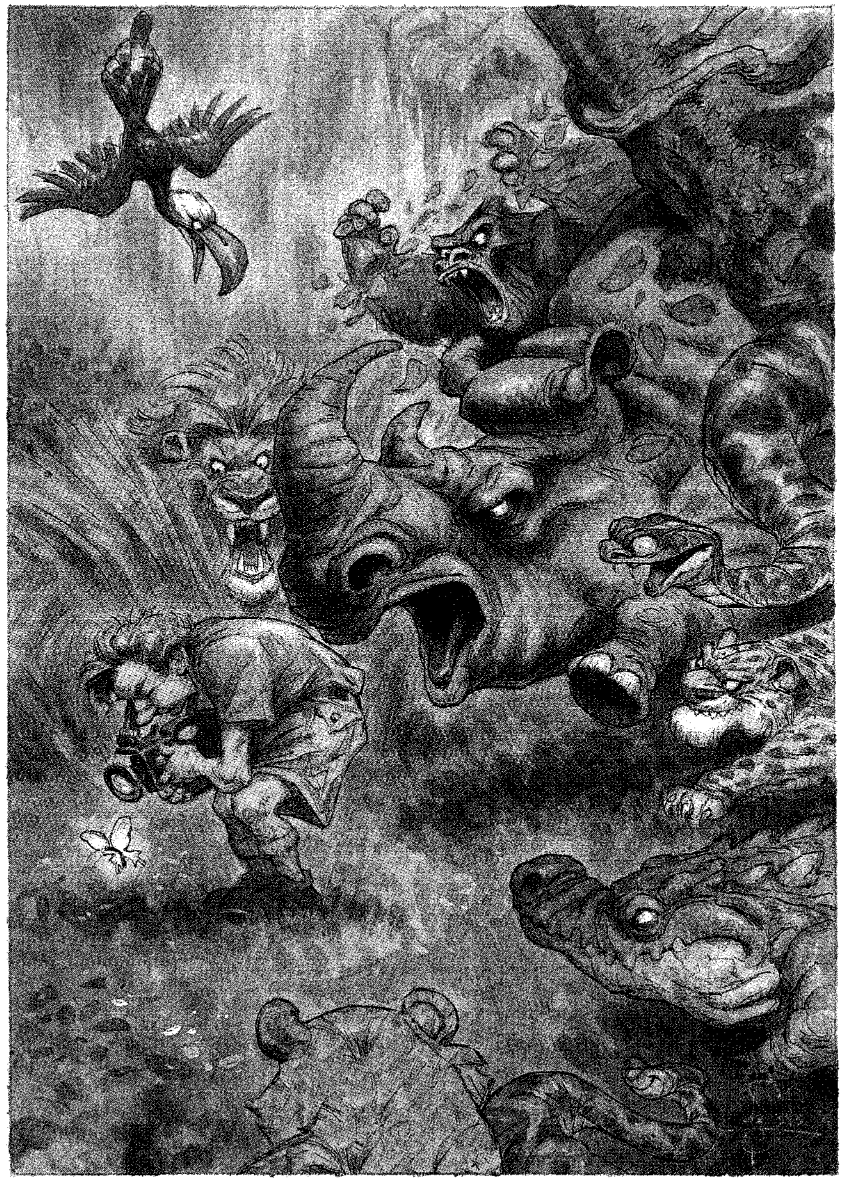


PETER DE SÈVE

LETTER FROM EAST AFRICA

THE MAN WHO WAS EATEN ALIVE

Alan Root's wild kingdom.

BY GEORGE PLIMPTON

TWENTY years ago, on a beautiful spring day, the English wildlife documentary filmmaker Alan Root came to visit us in Sagaponack, Long Island. He and I took a walk by the ocean with my wife and our daughter, Medora. The tide was up, so the four of us kept close to the dunes. Terns rose on slender white wings and swooped down on us with shrill, reedy cries as they tried to steer us clear of their eggs, which were lying exposed on a sand flat. What was startling was that the terns focussed their attention solely on Alan. They careened so close that he threw up an arm as if to ward off an attack.

"They're having a bad day," he probably said, because that was how he often described his difficulties with animals in East Africa—that they were never to be blamed. I don't recall what I said—probably joked and remarked upon his unfortunate karma. I knew that Alan had lost part of his behind during an encounter with a leopard. His right leg had a hole in it from a hippo attack. The first finger of his right hand was missing. And the middle finger on that hand was a curious twiglike appendage, the result of a puff-adder bite.

That night after dinner, he told us about the hippo attack. The hippo's tusk had gone through his leg, breaking the fibula and leaving a hole that Alan said you could put a "Coke bottle" through—a vivid description that I can still hear him giving, in his soft, almost whispery voice. He showed us the scars, deep holes on either side of his calf.

Since then, I've kept up with whatever Alan happened to be doing. I watched his award-winning nature documentaries on television, among them "Secrets of the African Baobab," a film about the huge, weirdly shaped trees that the Masai of Kenya believe an angry god pulled up and flung back into the ground upside down; "Mysterious Castles of Clay," a film about a termite mound and its diverse inhabitants; and "The Year of the Wildebeest," which traced the huge migrations of the wildebeest herds in the Serengeti. (Alan called it "Brave Gnu World.") His films were among the first to show wild animals in their natural state—without the presence of human spectators. David Attenborough once referred to him as the man who made "natural-history filmmaking grow up."

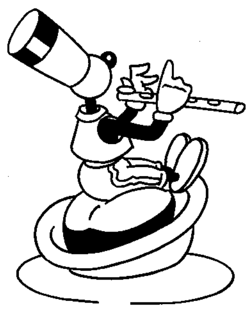
I saw Alan during trips to Africa, and I visited him at his house on Lake Naivasha, where he was living with his first wife, Joan. On one occasion, what I thought was a water bed on the far side of the living room got up, walked out the door, across the grass, and into the lake—a pet hippo named Sally.

Then, a few years ago, I heard that Alan, while shooting a sequence for "Gorillas in the Mist"—a film about the primate expert Dian Fossey, starring Sigourney Weaver—had been charged by a gorilla and injured; a bad shoulder wound was the report. It occurred to me that what Alan truly loved about Africa was slowly chipping away at him: a consortium of hippos, snakes, leopards, and, now, gorillas. I thought that the next time I had the chance I'd pay him a visit and talk to him about how all this had affected his romance with African wildlife.

The chance came last year when I was in Tanzania on a bird-watching expedition. I called Alan, and he suggested that we talk at his new home, near Nairobi, and then fly in his plane down to Mzima Springs, where he had been attacked by the hippo. I was delighted to hear this, though, frankly, I was wary of flying with Alan. He had a bizarre history with airplanes. He told me over the phone that he had recently crashed two helicopters, but that was all right, because he'd ordered a third, from South Africa. I recalled a famous story about Alan's having taken Lord Mountbatten through Hell's Gate, a miniature Grand Canyon in northern Kenya. The plane's wingtips were just yards away from the cliffs on either side, and, at one point, Mountbatten asked, over the roar of the engine, what would happen if someone should be coming the other way. Alan replied that the only other person who flew the gorge was his old friend Iain Douglas-Hamilton, the elephant expert, and it was very simple: if the two were approaching each other head-on, Iain was supposed to go up and Alan was . . . now hold on, Alan was supposed to go up . . . no, wait a minute, Iain . . . and during this palaver Mountbatten sat stiffly, staring straight ahead.

ALAN and his second wife, Jennie, live on the Athi River, where they have built a dam to form a small water hole. A herd of impalas looked up as I arrived in my taxi. The house, which is of modern design, sits high above the river on an escarpment at the edge of the Nairobi National Park.

Alan and I settled ourselves on a terrace overlooking the river. It was good to see him. He looked just the same. The English in Kenya—and especially those who work in the bush for a living—never seem to change. Alan, who stands slightly over six feet, has tousled sandy-graying hair, which seems to have rarely had a brush or a comb put to it; a face permanently reddened by the sun; round glasses that give him a slightly owlish look; and that soft voice, which seems so at odds with the adventurous life he's led. Now in his sixties, fit and trim, he hardly seems the worse for the peculiar kind of wear he's been through.



Jennie brought out some tea. She is ill with leukemia—very thin, pale. The fact that she has survived the disease for sixteen years is undoubtedly due, in part, to the intensely compassionate relationship between the two of them. Alan once wrote me, "I have learned so much from this wonderful woman, and it is so hard to see her betrayed by her body."

She sat with us for a while, laughing softly from time to time when Alan touched on something that amused her. He began, at my request, to talk a bit about himself. Born in England, in 1937, he had come out to Kenya ten years later, from London's war-torn East End, when his father took a job as the plant manager of a meat-packing factory twenty-odd miles southeast of Nairobi. There was wildlife everywhere—it was a time when leopards were a common enough sighting in the suburbs—and Alan was infatuated with it. At school, he put on an exhibit called Root's Reptiles.

"My parents knew nothing about wildlife, but they were happy to let me do anything I wanted to do, though they didn't want me to keep poisonous snakes," he said. "In fact, I had snakes all over the house, in pens and pits—cobras, puff adders. I just told my parents that they weren't poisonous. My poor old mom didn't know the difference—this great, bloody puff adder in a crate in a corner of the room. She thought it was harmless until the day she died."

In 1952, the Mau Mau insurrection erupted in Kenya, and a state of emergency was declared that lasted for seven years. Alan was released from school—which he disliked intensely—and he spent a couple of years "chasing the Mau Mau," as he put it, around the forests of the Aberdare Mountains. Many of his compatriots went on to become professional big-game hunters, putting to practice what they had learned while tracking the Mau Mau. Alan, on the other hand, used his expertise to further the interest he'd shown with Root's Reptiles—capturing animals for the world's zoos. Exploring the Aberdares and their bamboo forests, he learned how to capture the rare bongo antelope, an animal so highly strung that it invariably dies from shock if mishandled. When Alan started the project, there were almost no bongos in captivity. Within five years, he captured nearly thirty of them. Since they breed easily—"like flies"—he shut down his camp. "I caught all the bongos the world needed," he said at the time.

Over the years, Alan has kept a number of pets, many of which were brought to him as orphans: cheetahs, leopards, waterbucks—everything, he said, except a giraffe. I asked which species had been the most difficult to raise. He picked the aardvark—the insect-eater that has a snout almost as long as the rest of its body. "Very difficult animal," Alan said. "It needs termites. It came to us as an orphan when Joan and I were living on Lake Naivasha. We took on the cook's son to look after the aardvark. The boy was retarded, and could never get any work. It was a wonderful arrangement. All he had to do was follow the aardvark around. It would dig these enormous holes. The cook's son would fill them in. Then the aardvark would move on and dig another huge hole, dig himself completely out of sight, and the cook's son would wait for him to climb out."

"You name your pets," I said. "What did you call the aardvark?"

"Million," Alan replied.

"Million?"

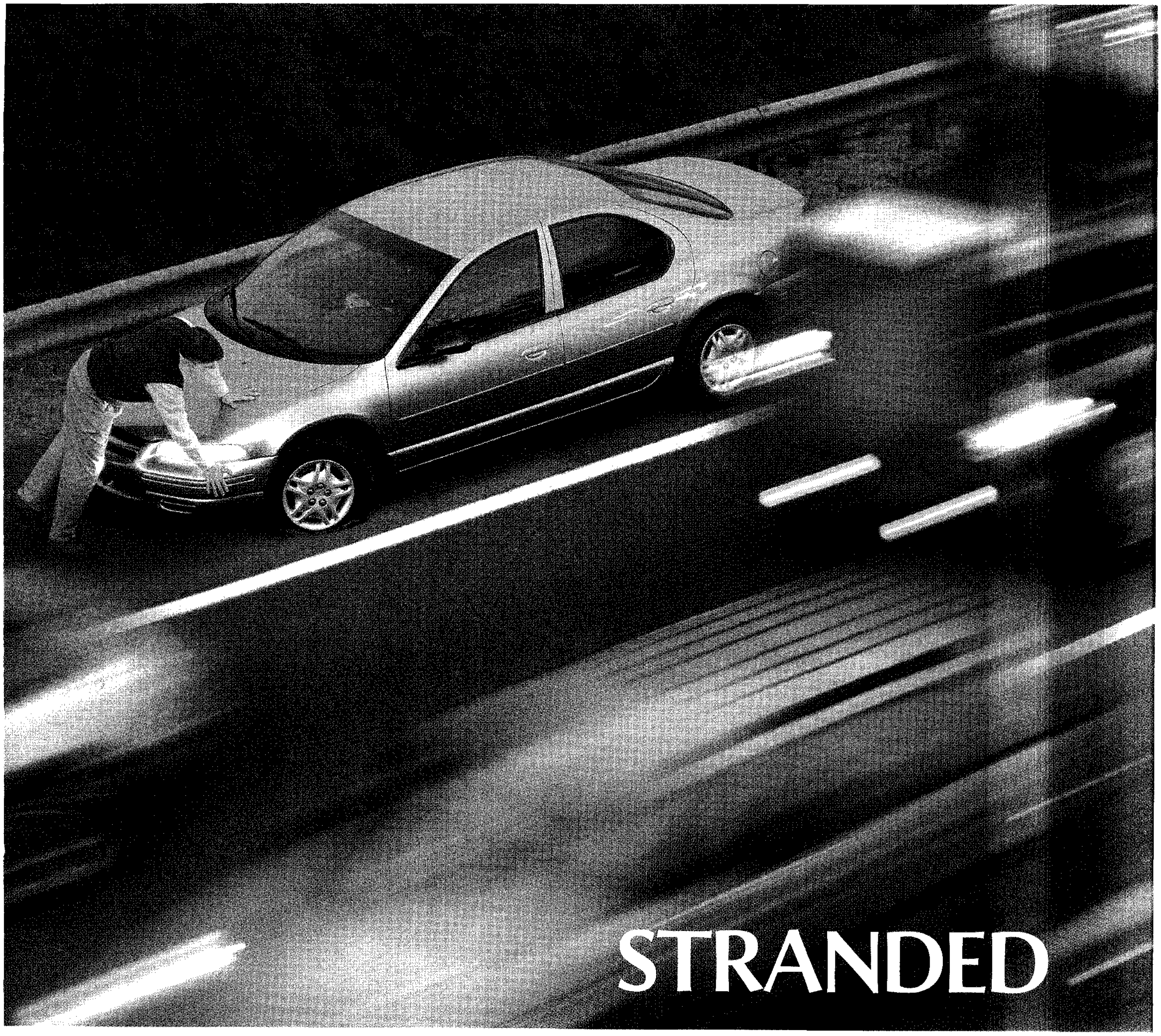
"Yes, as in 'Aardvark a million miles for one of your smiles.' "

"Oh, yes."

I asked him about the pet hippo I'd mistaken for a water bed.

"Sally," Alan said. "Her mother died in the 1974 drought, at Lake Baringo. Sally was about the same size as the aardvark. They would walk around together. So the cook's son had double responsibility. Sally loved sucking on pillows. Security blankets. With her chin on the edge of the sofa, she'd suck these things. After a while, they weren't much to look at—or to sit on, for that matter."

WE began talking about Alan's early career as a filmmaker. During the years he spent trapping animals, Alan had also made an eight-millimetre film, more or less of home-movie quality, which had come to the attention of an East African Airways



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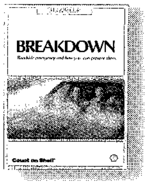

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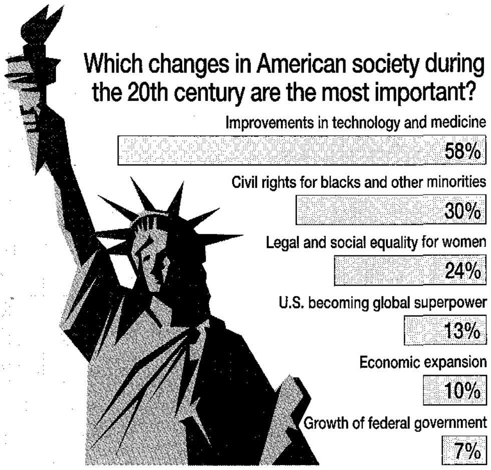
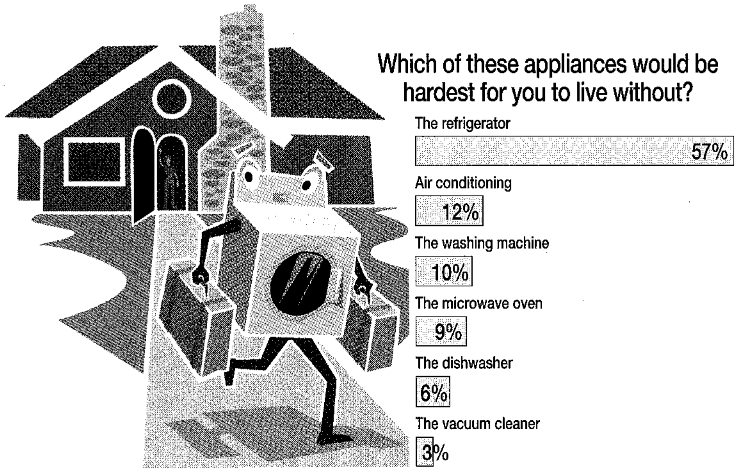
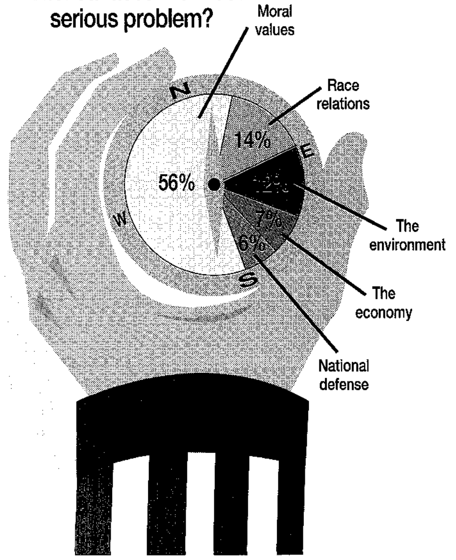
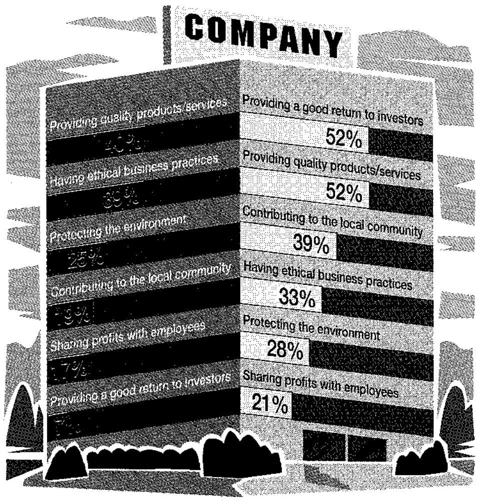

Which changes in American society during the 20th century are the most important?

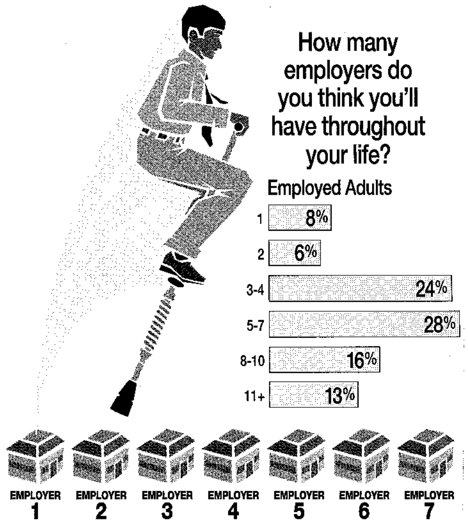

Which of these appliances would be hardest for you to live without?

In which area would you say America faces the most serious problem?


Which are the most important values for businesses to uphold?

How good a job are businesses doing at upholding these values?



How many employers do you think you'll have throughout your life?


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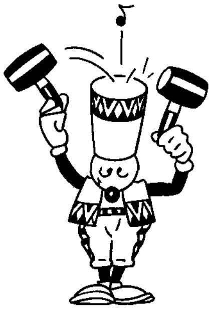
pilot and would-be film producer. He hired Alan to shoot the day-to-day activities of a bird called a lily-trotter, a curious long-legged waterfowl with extra-long toes that enable it to walk on water-lily leaves. The film led to Alan's next job, which was to photograph animals in the Serengeti for a popular British series entitled "On Safari." In the Serengeti, Alan met Bernhard Grzimek, a zoologist from Frankfurt, Germany, who was planning a documentary about the movements of the wildebeest and the zebra.



"Grzimek got me involved in a strange scientific experiment," Alan recalled. "He had been a veterinarian in the war. Not much to do—very few horses—so he began experiments on animal recognition to determine the visual requirements necessary for an animal to identify another member of its species. Would a real horse nuzzle up to a fake one—a Cubist horse, for example?"

"Not much help to the German war effort," I said.

"Very little," Alan agreed. "And I'm sure Grzimek was happy about that. But he was obsessed with what he was doing, and he carried on his experiments in East Africa. A toymaker in Germany made these inflatable-rubber animal dolls—pretty grotesque—to see what wild animals in the Serengeti would make of them.

"Predictably, the animals we'd thought were going to be smart turned out that way," Alan went on. "Elephants—they either ran away or made demonstration charges. Others weren't smart at all. The rhinos! I would walk toward them holding this huge fake rhino by the hind legs, and the rhinos would come up and head-butt, carrying on as if they were the best of friends with this thing. One day, we came across a female rhino, very aggressive. Not only did she have a calf but she was also in season. Males had come around; she had chased away a couple of them. I came up to her with my rubber rhino. She went for it and tore it open with her horn. It immediately deflated—phffft. I had felt very safe behind the thing, and suddenly it was gone! There I was, standing right in front of her, ten feet away, and watching her go absolutely bananas. The fake rhino swirled around in the air like a balloon let loose, and the remains of it landed on the real rhino's back. Fortunately, she thought that something had jumped on her, so she whirled around. By the time she had turned in my direction, I'd made it safely to the car."

Alan said that, although he admired Grzimek's strong views on conservation, he disagreed with him about whether human beings should be photographed with the animals, for dramatic purposes. In those days, a typical device was to show the animals being viewed by tourists on safari; invariably, one of the tourists was a young woman in jodhpurs and safari hat, who would exclaim in delight at sighting a baboon family. Alan felt strongly that animals could carry the show on their own. His opinions were dismissed not only by Grzimek but also by the home office in Frankfurt, which kept sending cables: "This new batch of films was great. The elephants were a bit out of focus. We're still waiting for the naked women."

One day, Grzimek asked Alan to round up a group of Masai girls. "They'll be bathing," Grzimek said. "Naked. Splashing water on each other. An animal on the side of the pool will frighten them and they'll all run out, dripping."

"I'd grown up in this very uptight community, and it wasn't easy for me," Alan recalled. "But in the end we found eight good-looking girls—not Masai but from Nairobi. They were suitably buxom, and we put them in this pool, splashing around, and then we made a noise that was supposed to be an angry wild animal, and they all rushed out of the pond and into a grove of fever trees. Then a shot of a leopard filmed many miles away in a fever tree was cut in. . . . Innocent days. The film was called 'Serengeti Shall Not Die.' Got an Oscar the next year."

Alan continued, "The amazing thing about Grzimek was how he would ruin his wonderful nature films by introducing the human stuff. The film would have this great footage of a lion charging a wildebeest, and then

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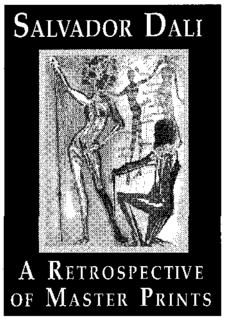

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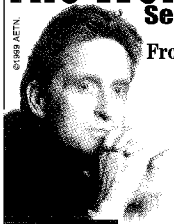

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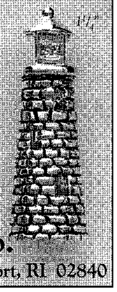

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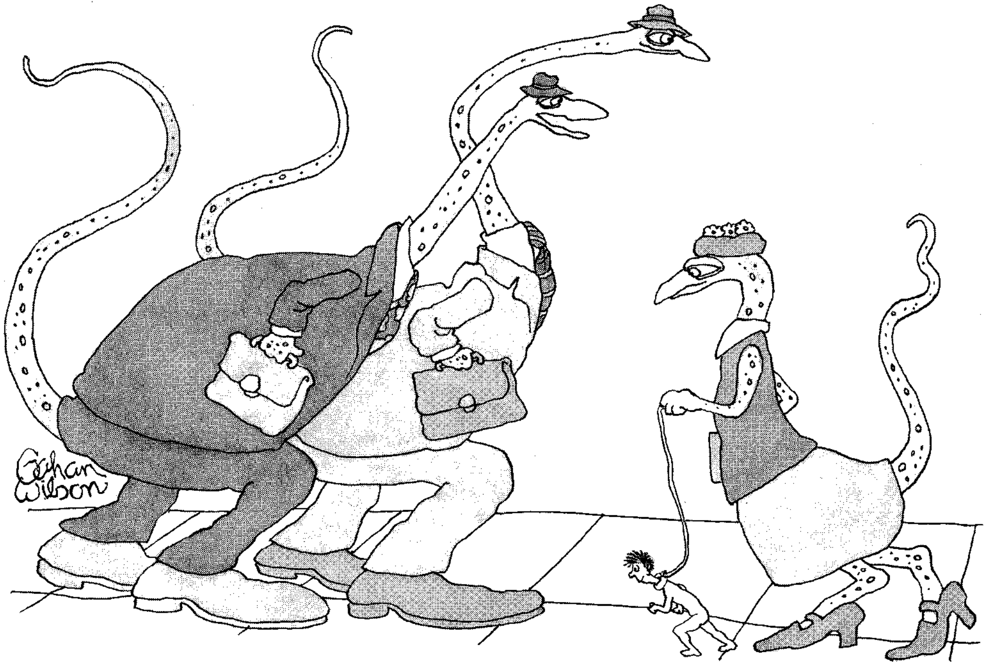


"Anyhow, according to the Science 'Times,' things would have turned out quite a bit differently if that meteor had hit Earth."

suddenly you'd be watching a veterinarian in the zoo removing a golf ball from a cheetah's mouth."

IN 1962, when Alan was twenty-six, he was given the opportunity to make the kind of films he wanted to do. A small British production company had recently made a highly praised documentary about the animals of London's Hyde Park—mainly squirrels and swans. Its managing director, Aubrey Buxton, decided that his cameras should venture farther afield. He travelled to East Africa in search of Alan, whose work he had admired, and found him on the far bank of the Rutshuru River, in the Congo. The river was in its flood stage, so Buxton had to shout his offer—for Alan to make a series of nature films—across a tumult of water. Alan accepted, and he has been with Survival Anglia—as Buxton's company came to be called—ever since.

Alan went on to tell me about what was perhaps the most peculiar project he did for Survival Anglia—the documentary-length survey of a termite mound, entitled "Mysterious Castles of Clay."

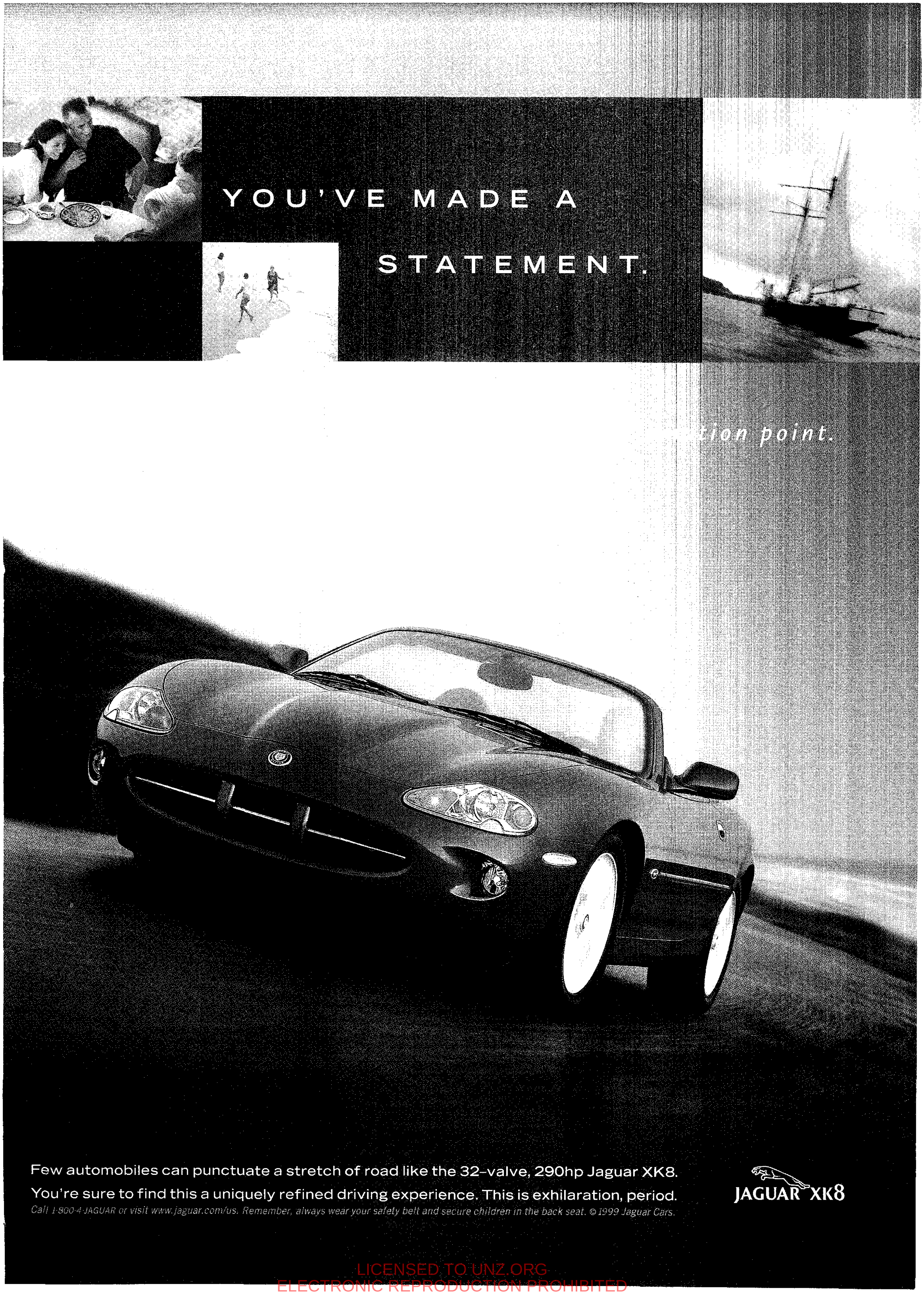
"Not an easy subject to sell," I suggested.

Alan nodded. "Survival needed to sell the film in the States, and the distributors got very concerned," he said. "The head honcho said, 'Around here, "termites" is the same kind of word as "cancer." Ninety per cent of Americans have homes built of wood. They don't want to hear about termites.' So I went off and made it anyway." Alan's termite film turned out to be one of the most honored nature films ever made, winning both a Peabody and an Oscar nomination.

I asked him about a memorable moment in a short film he had made about the shooting of "Mysterious Castles of Clay." In the scene, his wife Joan had enticed a spitting cobra to let loose a stream of venom with such accuracy that the poison hit the protective mask she was wearing. This got us to talking about snakes, which led to my inquiring about the puff-adder bite that had destroyed most of the first and middle fingers of Alan's right hand.

The accident occurred in 1968, in Joy Adamson's camp in the Meru National Park, in Kenya. Along with Joan, Alan had flown there with an American in the movie business who wanted Adamson—the celebrated author of "Born Free," about Elsa, her pet lioness—to lend her name to a 3-D project involving animals. "I went off for a walk around camp," Alan recalled, "and I found this huge puff adder—a female, really big and fat, four and a half feet long, which is large for the species. Puff adders are quite easy to catch. Their heads are arrow-shaped, and you can get them by the neck. I thought that Adamson's visitor would be interested in seeing one, so I brought it into camp. I showed him how the fangs worked, lifting them out of their recesses with a knife edge. Joy brought out her camera and took some pictures. Then I put the snake down to let it sidle off into the bush. Just then, Joy announced that she didn't have any film in her camera. So I went after the puff adder and tried to catch it the same way. It was waiting for me, and it struck, getting me on the knuckle. Excruciating pain—right from the start. The problem was that I'd been bitten a few years earlier by a burrowing viper, which isn't fatal but is quite painful, and, as a cure, I'd been given an antivenom. The next time you take an antivenom, the body will fight back and you can get a shock reaction, so I decided not to have it. Halfway on the flight to Nairobi, I started vomiting—fainting, dizziness, and so on. I decided I'd better have the antivenom. Joan gave me three cc.s of the stuff in the muscle. By the time we got to the hospital, I couldn't walk. I was rushed inside, and the people there obviously thought I was in this terrible state because of the snakebite, when in fact I was having an allergic reaction to the antivenom. Joan was outside paying the taxi-driver. Before she could come in and explain, they gave me another ten cc.s—this time intravenously. I went into anaphylactic shock. They rushed me to the emergency room, where I was resuscitated. Then the puff-adder poison took over. It works slowly. After two or three days, my whole right arm went completely black. It looked like a row of black plums, huge blisters full of blood that ran all the way down from my armpit to my waist. In the end, it was necessary to amputate only the first finger."

After getting out of the hospital, Alan had dinner with Richard Leakey, who was then the director of the National Museums of Kenya. He presented Leakey with the remains of his finger in a covered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dish. "I told him that it was the first installment of bits bitten off, the rest to follow in various jars."

I laughed and said, "You had a premonition that more was to come."

Alan smiled. I leaned forward and said, "I'm surprised that you let the puff adder go. Dangerous to have around camp."

"The puff adder was having a bad day," he said. "Not its fault at all."

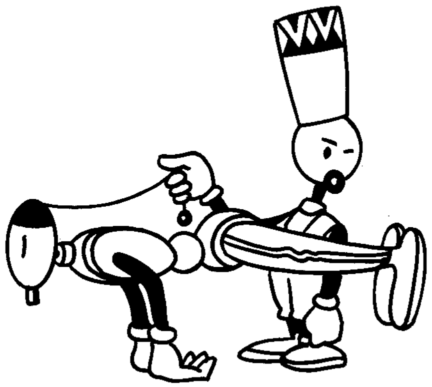
"How about that leopard? Do you bear it any ill will for what it did to you?"

Alan said, "Three of us had been filming all morning in the Serengeti. We walked up one of those boulderlike hills—what are called kopjes—clapping our hands and making noise in case there was something sleeping or hiding in the bushes. Nothing. So we went to the top of the kopje and had a nice lunch. I saw an owl fly out from an overhanging rock. We figured that something must have disturbed it, so we climbed to the top of the rock and looked down and we saw a dead jackal lying there—freshly dead, not a mark on him. I'd had a beer for lunch, and I wasn't really thinking very clearly, because obviously a dead jackal doesn't frighten an owl. I decided to jump down—a six-foot drop—and investigate. Well, right underneath the overhang of the rock was a leopard. He'd heard us talking, just above him. I landed with my knees bent and my backside straight in the leopard's face. He jumped out"—Alan made a guttural roar as illustration—"and bit me twice in the buttocks, and then ran off down the slope. The bites didn't hurt at all—not a lot of nerve endings there—but the wounds were deep, and there was a spectacular amount of bleeding, pouring down my legs. I thought I'd better report to the warden of the Serengeti, my friend Myles Turner. I walked into his office, squirting blood. He could see I wasn't badly hurt. He said, 'What happened to you?' I said, 'One of your leopards has bitten me in the bum.' He looked at me and said, 'You know you're not allowed to feed animals in the park. Get out of here!' "

The next day, Alan and I flew down from Nairobi to Mzima. Our flight was reasonably uneventful—at least, by his standards. As we neared Mzima, the flat country gave way to rolling hills. Alan said that we were over the country of the Wakamba, the great hunters of the Serengeti. He pointed out, high on the grass slopes, a small herd of eland that appeared to be pursued and then caught and passed by the plane's shadow. The hill country gave way to ancient, quiescent volcanoes, pocket-size and quite close to one another. From above, they looked like barnacles on a waterlogged piece of timber. The ash from the volcanoes provides a natural water filter for the Mzima Springs, a series of ponds, like a vast aquarium, which allow a crystal-clear view of whatever is moving around within—fish, turtles, the spotted-necked otter, crocodiles, hippos.

That afternoon, Alan showed me the pool where his disastrous encounter with the hippo had occurred. We could see the backs of four or five hippos above the water level—motionless, hardly alarming.

"I was filming while wearing an Aqua-Lung," he said. "Upstream, two males started to scrap—nothing to do with me—running half in and half out of the water, and it stirred up all this mud and hippo dung on the bottom, so that there was zero visibility. We had a guy filming me and my wife—filming us making a film. I had told everyone not to swim around if the water got stirred up but to stay still, sit on the bottom, and the current flow would clear everything in a few minutes. So we were all sitting on the bottom, pretty nervous. Because we weren't sure where these hippos were, we were breathing heavily. Lots of bubbles. And one of the hippos—I think the one who lost the fight—came back, and, seeing all those bubbles on the surface, thought they came from the hippo he'd been fighting, so he charged into the bubbles, slashing with his jaws. One of his tusks caught Joan's face mask and shredded the rubber and broke the glass—incredibly, without touching her skin. She had no idea what had happened—just that her face mask had suddenly vanished. The hippo turned, and I felt the pressure of the wave. It knocked me backward, and my legs came up in the air. He caught them in his mouth and shook me like a dog with a slipper. The people on the bank said that I came up out of the water three times, and then went back down. The hippo kept banging me on the bottom. And then, suddenly, he stormed off. I can remember very vividly hearing the sound of the tusks scissoring my legs, and I could feel the whiskers of his chin on the back of my thighs. My cameraman saw all the blood and pulled me up onto the bank. The tusk broke the smaller of the two bones in the leg, and it left a hole"—I knew what was coming—"that you could put a Coke bottle through. I got in the back of the car with a bottle of Glenfiddich and off we went to the airstrip. A bit of gangrene set in, but they fixed it at the hospital in Nairobi. Then, after two months, we went back to Mzima and finished up."



"Could you recognize the hippo that got you and shook you the way a dog shakes a slipper?"

"Oh, yes," Alan said. "A low-ranking male. He'd obviously been beaten up a lot. Many scars. I'm sure that he meant no malice toward me."

Once again, I was struck by Alan's compassion for animal life, despite the deprivations he had endured. He once told the writer and filmmaker John Heminway that upon his death he wanted to be laid out on the Serengeti—his remains to be eaten by vultures, hyenas, beetles, and botflies, as a way of repaying his debt to wildlife. I mentioned this, and Alan said, "We'll have to find a secluded place. There are so many tourists with video cameras these days. I wouldn't want shots of vultures fighting over my extremities to end up on CNN."

I laughed and said, "Yes, you wouldn't want to have people saying, 'That fellow's having a bad day.' "

We spent that night in a tent compound a few hundred yards from the Mzima Springs, as guests of two filmmakers, Victoria Stone and Mark Deeble. They were engaged in

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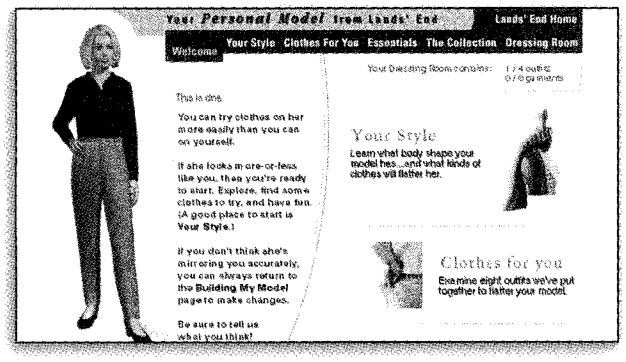
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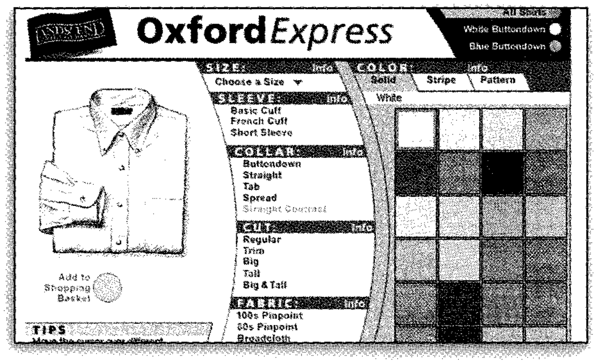
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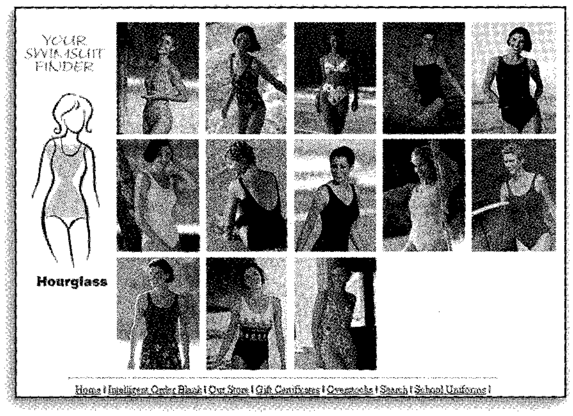
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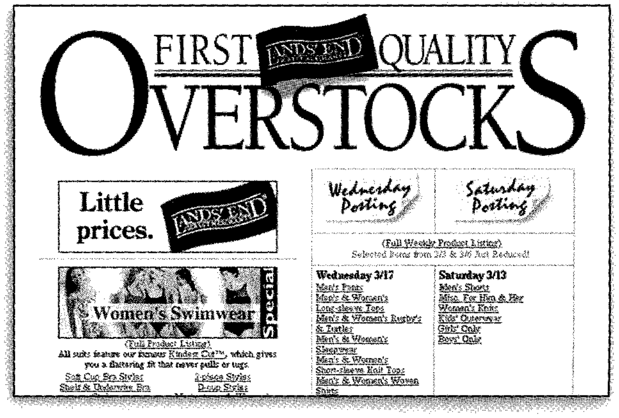
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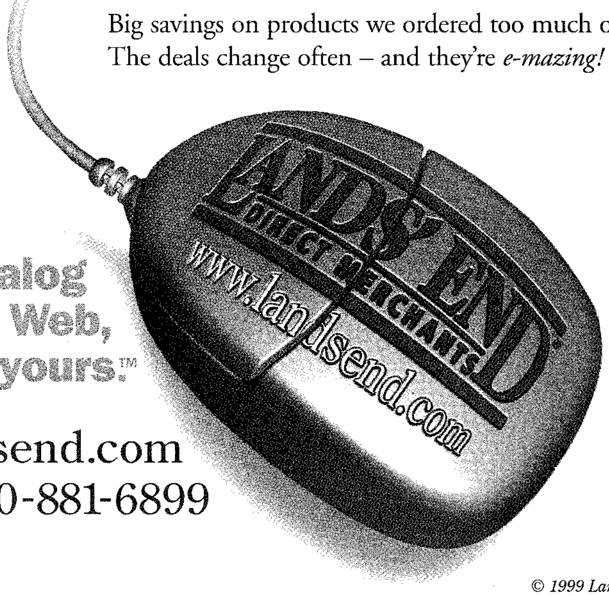
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very much the same kind of work—with vastly superior equipment—that Alan had done many years earlier.

The evening was cool. We ate outside. Mark put a Coleman lamp on the table, its wick set low, so that the faces of our little group were barely discernible at the edge of the darkness. A bottle of whiskey was produced. East Africa gossip. I was basking in the pleasure of where I was when I heard Mark say, "Peter Jenkins, who was the warden at Ithumba, was driving along under an escarpment near Voi when a rhino fell out of the sky and landed with a great crash just in front of him."

"Yes," Alan said. "I've heard that."

Mark went on, "Rhinos get to chasing each other around up there near the edge of the escarpment, and, since they don't see at all well, one of them will go off the edge."

We sat in the darkness and contemplated the spectacle of a falling rhino and the sound of it fetching up against the road. I said that I was reminded of a story I'd once heard—that some passengers on the bridge of a Dutch freighter pumping along in the Indian Ocean had suddenly been alarmed by two tremendous splashes a hundred yards or so off the bow, one after the other. When the ship slowed down, they discovered two dead cows floating with their legs up.

"Hmm."

I went on to explain that a Russian cargo plane carrying a shipment of cattle from Argentina to Minsk, or some such place, had found itself in trouble over the Indian Ocean when the cows started bellowing and stampeding back and forth. The only solution was to lower the back cargo door and get rid of some of the more obstreperous animals.

"Hmm."

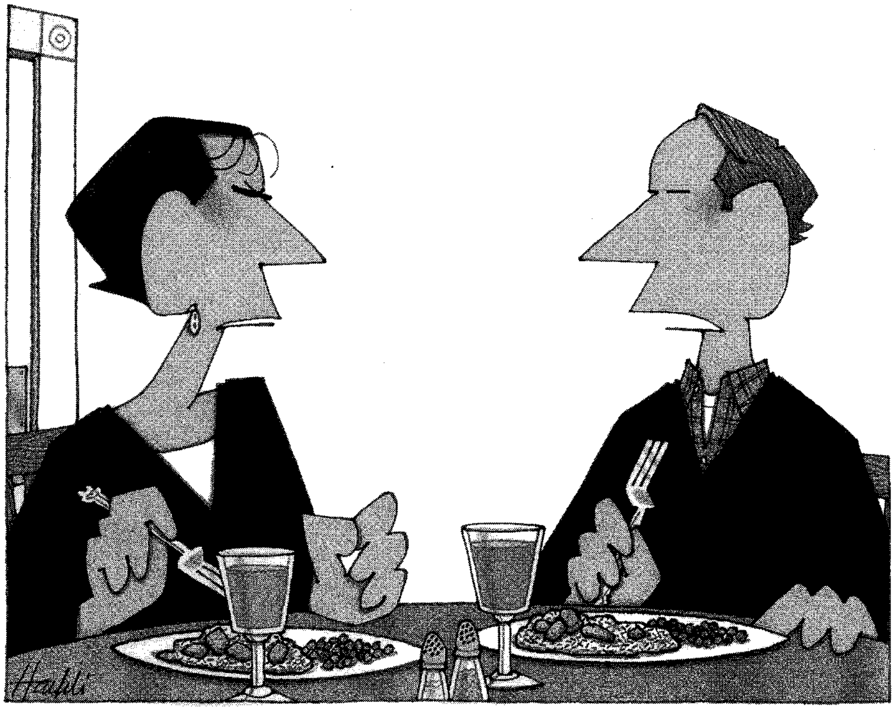
I said, "Your rhinos dropping into the road reminded me of it."

"Hmm."

This was typical of storytelling in Africa: there seemed never to be much of a reaction, even a cluck of astonishment or a request for amplification ("Why just two cows?"). After a while, you got used to it—letting the story run clean. I liked to think, of course, that the story was being filed away for future use—that Mark, say, would clear his throat at the fireside a year hence and begin, "This American chap was telling about this Russian cargo plane. . . . "

Alan finally broke the silence. He said, "I like the sound of hippos munching grass."

We began talking about noises in the African night. Alan said that the loudest unexpected sound he'd ever heard at night had erupted from a friend, Ian Parker, who was out by the latrine beyond the edge of a clearing. Pulling up his trousers, he had been bitten in the rear by a very large scorpion. "A great bellow," Alan said.



"I'm sorry—did you say something? I was off creating my own reality."

BACK in Nairobi, I finally heard the full story about Alan's mishap during the filming of "Gorillas in the Mist." "My job was to film a gorilla charge for the scene where Dian Fossey meets the gorillas," Alan told me. "I took the job because it kind of closed the circle for me. I had shown Fossey her first gorilla. It's hard to find a gorilla that charges all the way. Most of them are so accustomed to people watching them that it's very hard to get them to do very much. But there was a gorilla that everyone had heard about in the Kahuzi area, in Zaire. Very bad-tempered. His father had been killed by a poacher. He had killed a poacher."

"A lone gorilla? A rogue?"

"No, he had a family, but he was a dangerous animal. We found them the first day. I was wearing a big body mount to hold the camera, and I had to stand up with the camera fixed at eye level. I said to my assistant that it was crazy—the worst sort of body language to show a gorilla, because it looked like a weapon. We had found their tracks and were sitting there having coffee. I decided to attach a telephoto lens rather than get too close to him. While I was doing this, a younger male came up to take a look at us. He eventually got quite curious, and he began working his way toward us until he was only twenty yards or so away. When we stood up to film the older males, the young male didn't want to move. He sat there, watching us get closer and closer. I kept saying to him, 'Get going! Go on with you!' Then, suddenly, he panicked. He leaped up and ran, making a nervous, grunting sound. The big male—we couldn't see him—obviously heard him. He must have assumed that someone was chasing his kids: 'Got to do something about this!' "

Alan continued, "When a gorilla charges, basically it's just bluff: he tries to make himself as big as possible; he rears up, spreads his chest, and it's all to impress you. But this was completely different—no bluff at all. He came around the corner like a fucking great Doberman, low to the ground, looking straight at me. I started filming. He went out of focus almost immediately, and the next thing I knew he was on me. He grabbed me like a man grabbing a turkey—by the waist and one leg. He bit me on the leg and threw me down—teaching me a lesson—and then he ran off. Since I'd fallen backward, with the camera strapped to me, I couldn't get up. I thought he'd gutted me. He'd grabbed me by the waist with those huge hands—I'm sort of ticklish anyway—but the bite was actually in my thigh."

Alan showed me the scar: a U-shaped curve on his leg just above the knee. It looked as though a large slab of flesh had been lifted up and then settled back in place. He said, "I had a few weeks in hospital in Nairobi."

I wondered whether the people in the hospital were getting accustomed to these visits of his: "Ah, here we are again. What was it this time?"

After he got out of the hospital, Alan returned to the movie set. "I went back to the same gorilla," he said. "He was the only one who would give us what we wanted. We approached him differently, though—he was still very belligerent. We got the charging scenes, but this time he didn't have a good reason to come all the way at me."

I said, "That's quite something, going back to him."

"He was having a bad day that last time—a combination of the wrong body language with that equipment and the situation with the young male." Alan paused and grinned. "If you think his charge was impressive, you should have seen the bill I put in to Warners!"

WHILE I was getting ready to leave for the Nairobi airport, I said to Alan, "Have we covered everything? Hippo, leopard, puff adder, gorilla—anything else?"

"Well," Alan said, "I was once stabbed by a duiker—a little male antelope. Fierce little guys. They have very sharp horns that make neat punctures that close up and then turn septic. It was, in fact, my sister's duiker, and that made it worse."

"Hmm."

"I suppose I should show you this," he said. He pointed to a thin diagonal scar on his upper lip.

"What did it?" I asked.

"I was bitten by my pet mongoose."

I knew what he was going to say next, and he did:

"He was having a bad day." ♦

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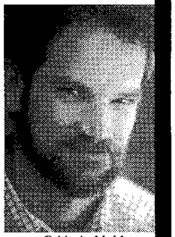

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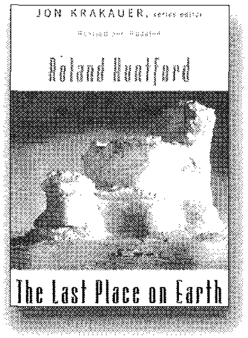

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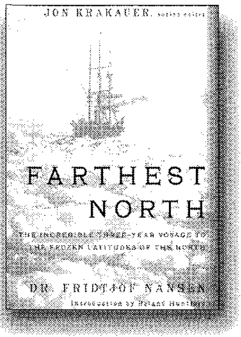

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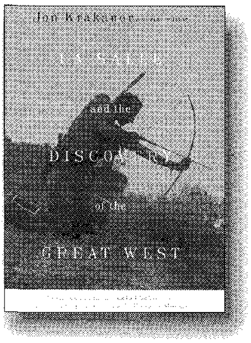

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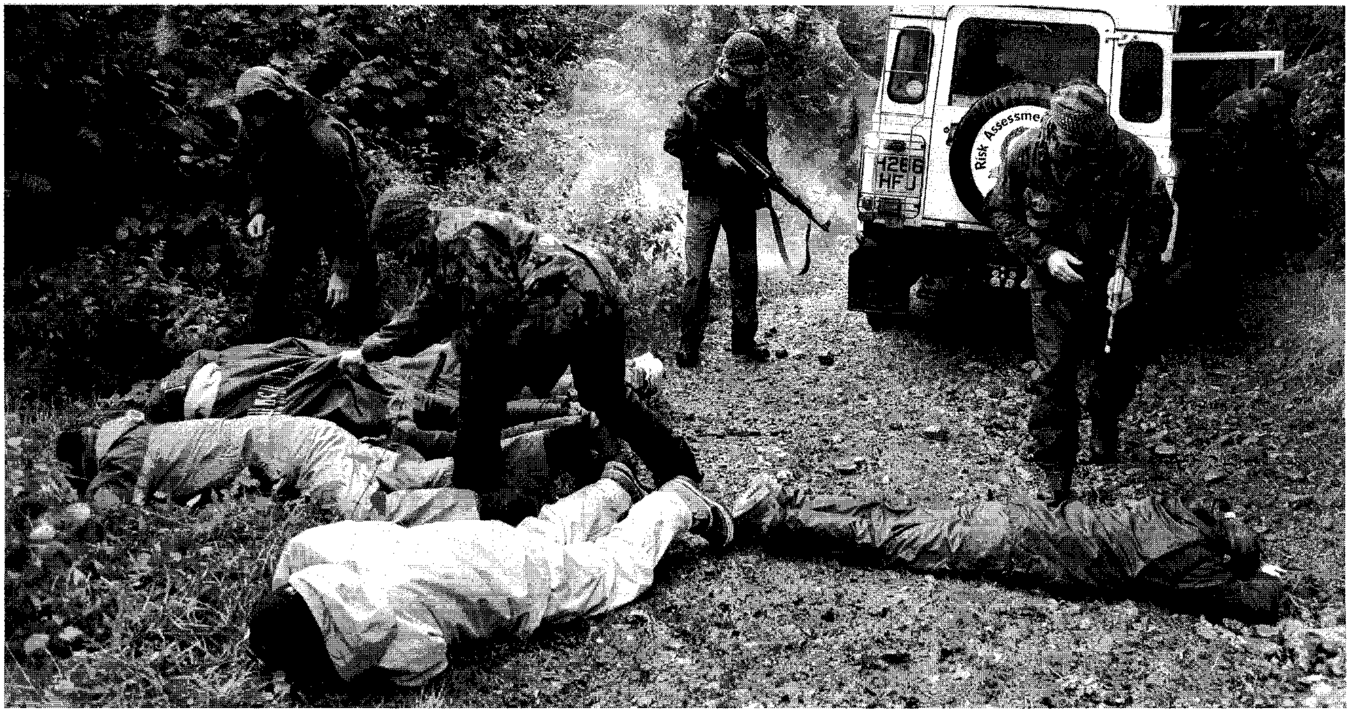
SCHOOL FOR SURVIVAL

Just how vulnerable is a reporter covering a war?

BY ELIZABETH RUBIN



“Soon we would be drinking tea and eating biscuits in a nearby manor house.”

ROBIN MAYES

ONE cold and drizzly afternoon last fall, I was riding with a group of BBC journalists through a stretch of leafy woodlands, when our driver suddenly hit the brakes. A red car was parked across the road, blocking our way. Men with guns, in balaclavas and combat fatigues, surrounded us, banging on the windows and firing Kalashnikovs into the air. “Get out! Get the fuck out!” they yelled. The doors were ripped open, and we were hauled from our seats and shoved face down into the wet grass and dirt. When I turned my head slightly to breathe more easily, someone grabbed my hair, pushed my face back into the mud, and shouted, “Keep your fokkin’ head down!” Then he wrapped a burlap sack around my head and hoisted me to my feet.

We’d been travelling in a convoy of twelve, in two Land Rovers, and we were now lined up, told to put our hands on the shoulders of the person in front of us, and marched away, stumbling up a hill. When we came to a patch of level ground, we were separated, and a man pushed me to the ground and made me stretch out flat with my legs apart. He crouched over me and twisted and pulled on my rings until he finally got one off my finger. Then he kicked my boots, tightened my hood, gave my head a jerk, and walked off.

Then nothing happened. All I could hear was the wind and my heart beating. The bag around my head was itchy, and I was getting claustrophobic. I tried to calm myself by closing my eyes and letting my mind wander. I heard a blackbird calling in the distance and remembered being in the Jewish cemetery in Sarajevo during my first days in Bosnia, in 1994. I was with two photographers, and we had just come across a new Bosnian military position. Armed men appeared and clearly thought that we were spies. One of them pulled me aside while another punched a photographer. They shoved rifle butts in our backs and took us to a house, where we were interrogated by an officer for several hours. We were released in the end, but, either for sadistic entertainment or for fear that we’d give away their position, the soldiers forced us to leave over a bridge that was a favorite target of Serbian snipers.

As I lay in the wet grass with a hood over my head, I wondered what I could have done differently that day in Sarajevo. Not ventured so close to contested terrain? Perhaps. But isn’t that what reporters do?

While what had happened in Sarajevo had been unnerving, what was going on here in the woods was merely uncomfortable. I knew that our abductors were British instructors, that the kidnapping was a fake, that it was part of a Hostile Environments course for journalists, which is given by Centurion Risk Assessment Services, on an estate in Hampshire, not far from Heathrow Airport. Soon we would be drinking tea and eating biscuits in a nearby manor house with Steve, a former Royal Marine commando who had had more than twenty years of experience fighting in the Persian Gulf, the Falklands, Cambodia, and Northern Ireland. He would lecture us on how to deal with hostile militiamen at checkpoints

("Keep your hands visible; don't try to get away"); on evasive driving techniques ("Don't go in without an exit strategy; if you can see the rear tires of the car in front of you then you've got room to pull out and escape"); on communicating with kidnappers ("Don't talk first"); on avoiding mines—all the kinds of things a war correspondent could expect to run into in today's wars, whether in Bosnia, Kosovo, or Congo.

The Centurion course was established in 1993, at the behest of Chris Cramer, who was then the head of BBC News and is now the president of CNN International. The idea was initially very unpopular—"uncool," Cramer says. "It was pointed out to me in no uncertain terms that real men and women went to war and the children stayed at home. That getting your head blown off went with the territory." But the territory was changing, and too many of Cramer's correspondents were getting killed. In the first two and a half years of the war in the former Yugoslavia, more journalists died than had during the whole of the Vietnam War. And the Bosnian War was more conventional than most post-Cold War conflicts, which are often fought without clearly drawn front lines by irregular militias who do not like to have their activities observed. More than five hundred journalists have been killed on the job since the fall of the Berlin Wall.

If there was a single event that led the BBC to require battlefield training for all its war correspondents, it was the fatal shooting of a twenty-nine-year-old reporter, John Schofield, in August of 1995. Schofield had been covering Yugoslavia since the outbreak of the war. While he and his camera crew were trying to film houses burning in a Serbian village, Croatian soldiers opened fire. Schofield's torso was protected by body armor, but a bullet went through his neck. Two of his colleagues were also shot and wounded. It is unclear whether the Croatians fired because they didn't want scenes of burning, looted Serbian homes broadcast on the nightly news or because—as they claimed—they mistook the BBC crew for a Serbian reconnaissance party. Nor is it clear that Schofield took any unusual risks on the day of his death, although in the competitive news business caution is often at odds with pressure from editorial desks to supply the most dramatic images. "They'll tell you, 'Don't do anything dangerous,' and then ask, 'Why didn't you get the story?'" said one of my Centurion classmates, a fifty-nine-year-old BBC correspondent who had covered Vietnam and Northern Ireland.

As NATO troops fanned out across Kosovo last June, correspondents, spurred on by eager editors, rushed to find the first mass graves. One member of a British TV crew, who was taken to a site where some twenty people had purportedly been buried, even helped to dig up the earth himself—an act that could have destroyed crucial evidence in an investigation. Those first few days of peace were a disorienting time. Serb troops had not all pulled out of the province; you were never sure whom you'd run into at the next crossroads, which roads were mined, whose guns were firing in the distance. Two German correspondents for *Stern* magazine were executed by unidentified gunmen near one of Kosovo's main roads the day NATO arrived, and the rumor I heard among journalists at the clogged border crossings and in Pristina's Grand Hotel, where Serb secret police were still prowling, was that someone had lured them out of their car by promising to show them the site of a mass grave. A *Stern* correspondent who investigated the deaths told me that the two men had simply been the random and unlucky victims of a Serb carjacking on a well-travelled mountain pass. But none of the members of the Kosovo press corps I spoke with mentioned this version of the story. They could all relate to the idea of pushing one's luck for a scoop, and it was naturally more comforting to believe that there had been a reason, a mistake made—that fatal accidents could be averted by sound judgment.

Hence the Centurion course. BBC correspondents could not go to Kosovo unless they'd taken it, and freelance journalists can now get discounted war-zone insurance if they have a Centurion diploma. CNN, Reuters, the Associated Press, and the New York *Times*, among others, are also sending their foreign correspondents out for training in battlefield-survival skills. And last year the BBC, with the Freedom Forum European Center, dispatched former members of

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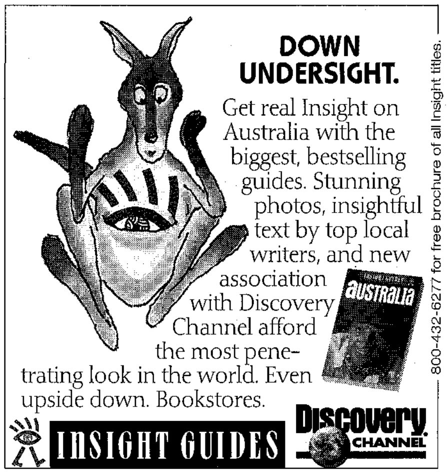
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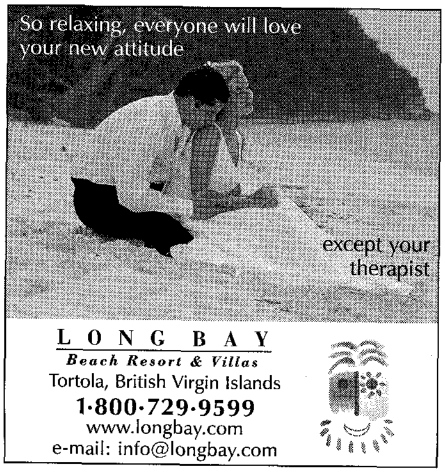

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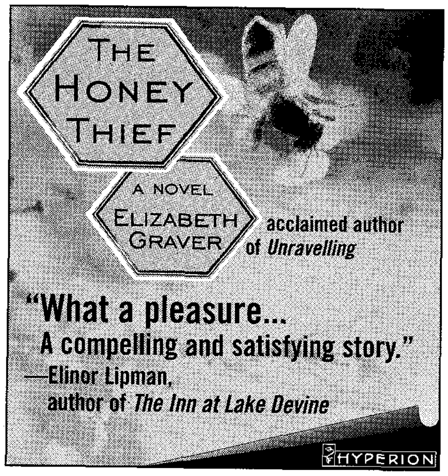

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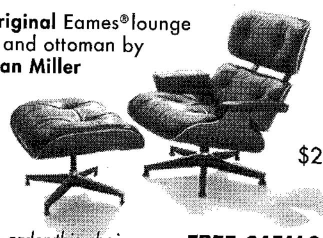

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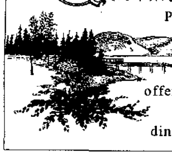

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the British Special Forces to Albania to teach local journalists the same techniques.

AFTER my kidnapped classmates and I were untied, brushed off, and driven back to our residence—a sixty-eight-acre estate surrounded by fountains, manicured gardens, duck ponds, and groves of chestnut, birch, and cypress trees—we were indeed served tea and biscuits and debriefed by Steve, who tended to talk as if he were in a "Rambo" movie. He told us that we should have been reassured by the silence that followed our abduction, because it was a sign that the "bad guys" knew what they were doing. "If the screaming continues," he warned, "you're in big trouble, because then it's amateur week." He had plenty of colorful advice to give us. "They'll put you in a world of pain," he said with a grin, "and then they'll be looking to see who's in charge. So be the gray man, just blend in." When someone suggested that one should run for cover from an incoming mortar round, Steve clutched his head in frustration. An exploding mortar round, he explained, sends burning pieces of metal flying at an upward angle, so the best thing to do is "hit the ground." After three and a half years of bombardment, Sarajevans were so conditioned to hitting the ground that for a short time after the war ended you could walk down the street and see people suddenly disappear from view at the sound of a car backfiring.

Over the four days of war school, through skits, live encounters, lectures, and videos, we were told how to react to almost every threat we could expect to confront on assignment: among them, the nearly hundred million mines that lie unexploded in sixty-two countries and have names like Bounding Betties, Widowmakers, and Dingbats; the forty million Kalashnikovs traded around the world, many of which are in the hands of children; the mortars, machine guns, booby traps, and improvised bombs used by kidnappers, terrorists, snipers, and thieves; ambushes, vehicle accidents, and helicopter crashes; frostbite, trench foot, hypothermia, heatstroke, malaria, dysentery, hepatitis, and assorted tropical diseases; scorpions, giant centipedes, black mambas, mosquitoes, killer ants, hippopotamuses, and elephants; depression, nightmares, hallucinations, and irrational thoughts.

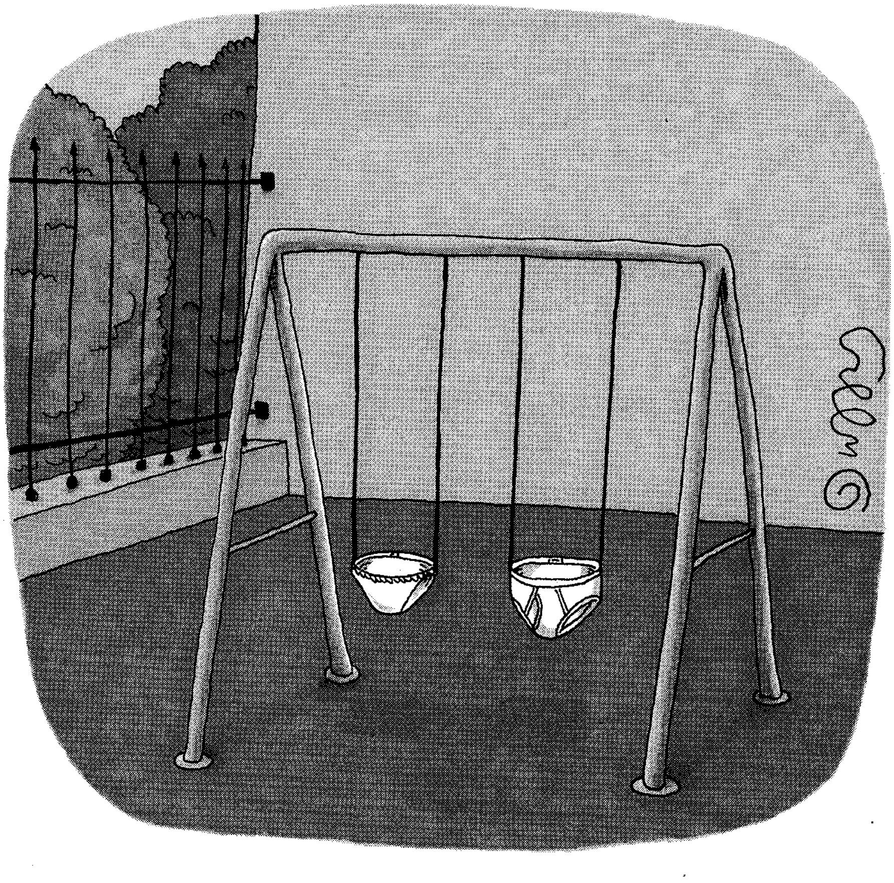
On the first morning of the course, we were taken to the Bisley Rifle Range, in Surrey, for a demonstration of "ballistics penetration." The class began with a video of recent war footage set to the accompaniment of Queen's "Another One Bites the Dust." It was meant, as our instructor put it, to illustrate that "scalawags don't fire single shots; they empty their magazines." On the shooting range, objects that one might try to hide behind were lined up at the base of a hillock: a brick wall, a concrete barrier, tree stumps, cinder blocks, wooden doors, car doors, sandbags, and a steel girder. There were also water jugs that represented the human torso, and dummies in flak jackets and helmets. It was damp and misty, and for nearly an hour two instructors lay in the mud and fired weapons ranging from a Colt .45 to a sniper's rifle loaded with rounds of armor-piercing bullets. The results were alarming. Just about everything was penetrated or demolished. Only a double layer of sandbags and the latest-model flexible ceramic body armor were reliably effective. The manufacturer of the body armor was standing by to deliver a product promotion, but one of our instructors, who had a vivid repertoire of similes, told us later that if we wore the manufacturer's flak jacket in the tropics, or even just in the summer, we'd be "sweating like a pedophile in a playground."

While our instructors' methods were often crude and their language was filled with macho bluster, they conveyed a message: if you're going to enter other people's wars without the benefit of rifles or bodyguards, or expose yourself to rebel groups who view journalists as legitimate targets, then you should know how vulnerable you are. Among the more interesting classes was one taught by Jon, a short, serious ex-marine, who had graduated from the most difficult military course in the British Army—sniper training—and been posted in Northern Ireland. He had lived, often for days at a time—eating, sleeping, taking photographs, wrapping his waste in cellophane—in the back-yard hedge of an I.R.A. house. He told us that fifty per cent of his work as a sniper had had to do with observation—evading it, and using it to read his environment. "You want to get a good photo of Sarajevo, so you go to the top of a hill. But that's stupid, because you're now a nice silhouetted target," Jon said. John Schofield and his camera crew may have been spotted by Croatian soldiers in this way. To avoid being "skylined," Jon told us, all you have to do is go ten metres down the hill, and the silhouette disappears without compromising the shot. He also showed us how from a distance a gunman might mistake a television camera for a shoulder-launched rocket system. He warned us not to look up at helicopters unless we wanted to be seen, because "the human face, no matter what color, shines." He showed us how a camera lens, a rivet on a pair of Levi's, or a silver pen would glimmer in the sun, and how a shadow could work for you or against you.

That afternoon, we were led down a wooded path and told to look for signs of danger. It seemed like a fairly easy task: a mortar was sticking out of the bracken; a tripod was visible in the woods; a grenade lay by an oak tree. We surmised that people had come under attack here and fled. But, when we went back over the trail, our instructors showed us what we'd missed: a man with a rocket-propelled grenade launcher, who was camouflaged under netting made of leaves; cartridges and a grenade pin by a tree that revealed someone's shooting position; a twig woven into a leaf overhead that was pointing to a mine; an army jacket and a Kalashnikov hanging in a tree, which probably meant that a sentry was sleeping there or nearby; and the branches in the middle of the trail that had "channelled" us into mines.

Land mines, anti-tank and anti-personnel mines, and homemade bombs—our explosives expert, Tommo, showed us a sampling of dozens of different types in cunning disguises. Some looked like wine bottles, some like Mr. Potato Head, others like sycamore leaves or candy boxes. He showed us how easy it is to improvise a bomb with household goods: a battery, a three-way switch, a clothespin, epoxy, ammonium nitrate taken from fertilizer, diesel fuel, a travel alarm clock, and a lunch box. His statistics on mines were ominous. Some five hundred people are killed by them every week. About a hundred million lie unexploded around the world. Fourteen years ago, there were approximately ten million mines in Afghanistan alone, and it was calculated that twenty-seven mine-clearing teams would take four thousand three hundred years to clear away twenty per cent of them.

As the course drew to a close, Dr. Bo



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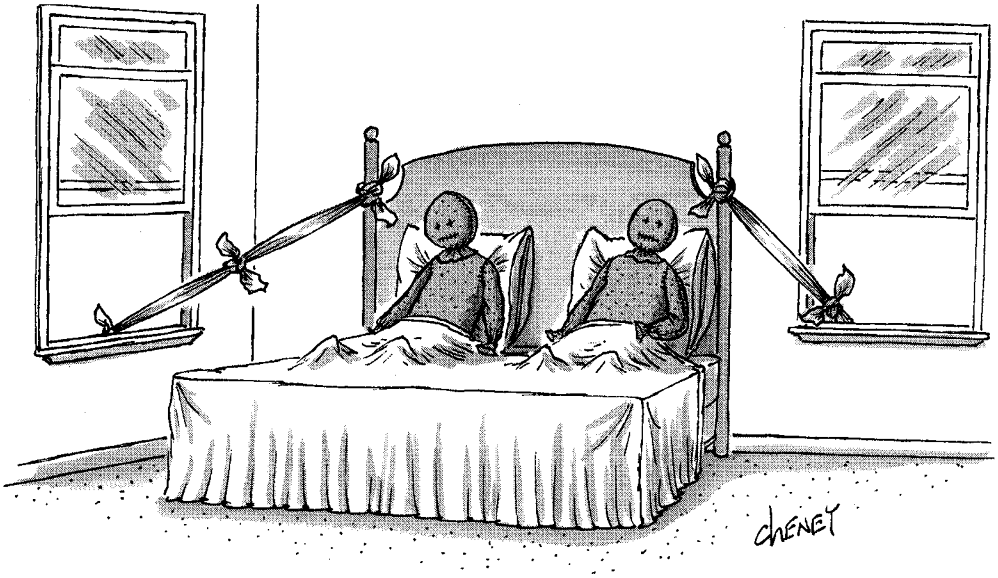


Mills, a Sri Lankan psychiatrist who had worked with former hostages in Lebanon, with Gulf War soldiers, and with other patients who had suffered severe traumas, spent a morning alerting us to signs of post-traumatic stress disorder—what used to be called shell shock, battle stress, combat neurosis, or, during the American Civil War, "soldier's heart." His style was simple and practical, if a little hokey. His model for the unconscious, for example, was a Coke bottle into which all of one's undigested painful experiences are deposited. If the bottle is full, he warned us, a seemingly insignificant incident can cause the unprocessed contents to erupt. "So don't go into danger with a full bottle," he warned.

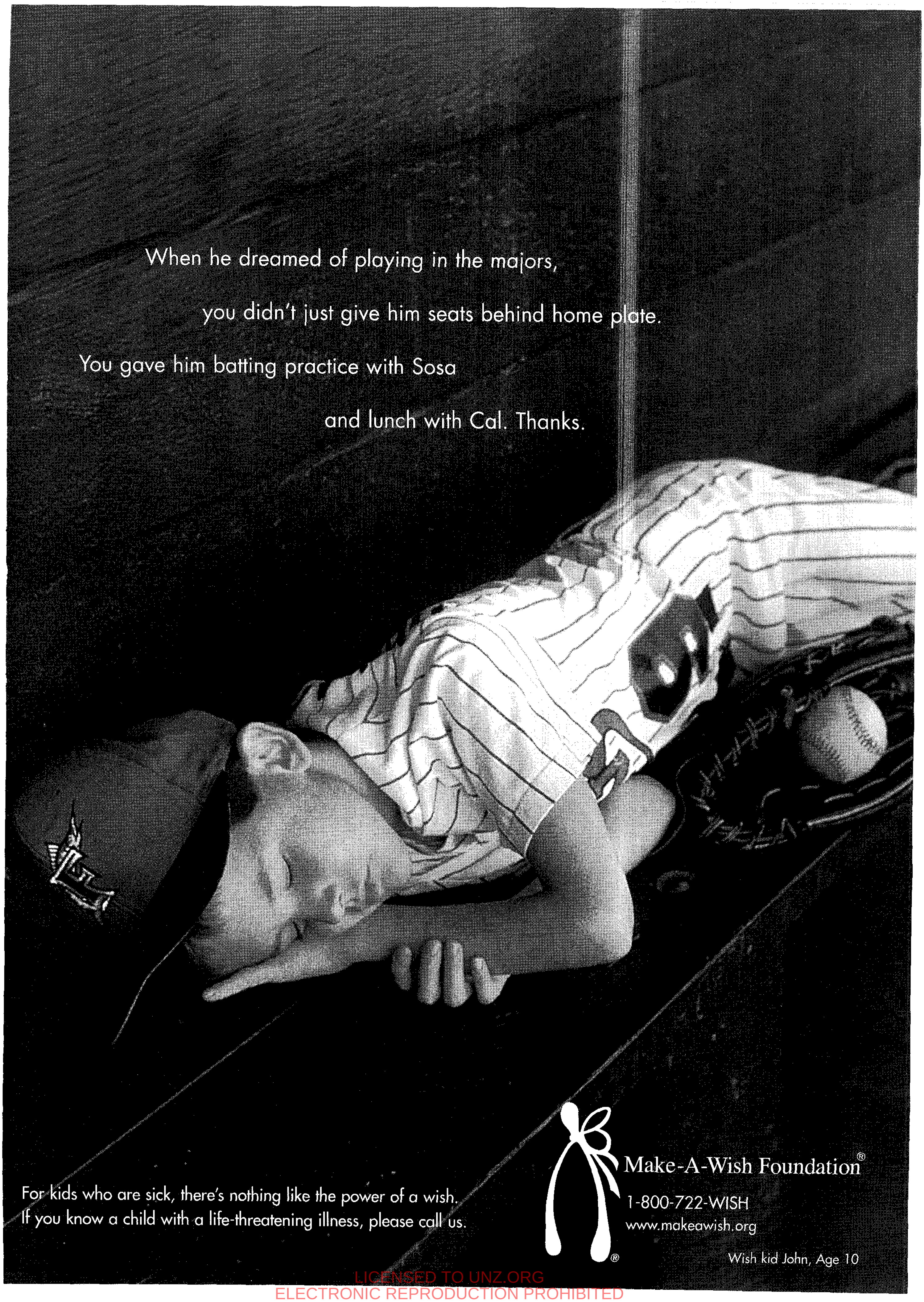
LAST summer, a BBC correspondent from Africa completed the Centurion Hostile Environments course, then returned to her homeland on an assignment. Near the end of her trip, she and some of her relatives were accosted by gunmen. They led her off into the shade of a mango tree, swore at her, and threatened to kill her. Two of them shoved rifles in her back, and one poked her in the stomach with his bayonet. She saw that they were drugged, and, she later told me, "I realized that this was the last day of my life." Before the Centurion course, she said, her instinctive reaction would have been to swear back at the gunmen and demand to know why she was being detained. Had she done so, she believes, she would have been killed.

Instead, she recalled the advice she was given after being "kidnapped" in Hampshire. "I said to myself, 'Let me control my breathing, let me keep cool, let me not be negative. I have to coöperate, I should not ask them questions, I should not pretend to be tough, I should not say no.' " The one time she did ask a question—"Can I go now?"—a militiaman said, "Let's kill her now." An argument erupted, and those who did not want an incident with a BBC correspondent prevailed: she was released, but her captors warned her that if she publicized the incident they would kill her family.

I was impressed by this story, but I had my doubts about what four days of survival training had done for me. My performance in the final test that our instructors prepared for us did not inspire confidence. My class was divided into two groups of six people, and we set off in Land Rovers to a nearby National Trust farm. Outfitted in flak jackets and helmets, we did our best to maintain a serious attitude, and the English couples walking their Alaskan huskies and terriers did their best to pretend not to notice us. We rotated roles as team leader, navigator, and driver, but were unsure exactly what we were looking for. After an hour or so, we came around a bend and heard cries for help coming from a ravine. Rod, a Centurion instructor, was playing a photographer who had just stepped on a land mine. Beside him lay Eric, a rubber first-aid dummy, posing as an unconscious reporter. A red-and-white-striped tape leading down into the ravine told us that the area was mined, which presented a dilemma. Should we save Rod or heed the danger signs? Rod kept screaming out in pain and assuring us that it was all safe, so we went down. He had rigged up a sophisticated fake wound on his lower leg, which made it appear that his fibula was broken and poking out of torn flesh that spurted blood. I was given the nasty job of bandaging him, and I tried to do so, despite his curses and agonized yelps. Two of us then helped him to limp back up the hill, while the other two carried Eric on an improvised stretcher.

Back at the Land Rover, Rod gave us his evaluation. First, he said, we might easily have ended up casualties of mines ourselves. "If I'm lying in a ditch bleeding, I'm going to tell you any lie that will get you down there to help me," he said. Second, all that blood meant that he had severed a major artery, and, since I had failed to apply enough pressure, he would probably have bled to death. But even had I applied enough pressure, by fumbling with the bandages directly on his wound I had tortured him with "such pain," Rod said, "that I probably would have risen up and clobbered you to death before dying myself."

ONE night in Pristina, a few weeks ago, I watched some Gypsy homes burning, with my friend Fisi, a Kosovar journalist and veteran of Centurion. Albanians all over Kosovo had accused the local Gypsies of helping the Serbs to loot, burn, and kill during their three-month terror campaign. Now the Albanians were taking revenge. Fisi told me that he had recently watched a similar blaze in his neighborhood, and that when children had started gathering in front of the flaming house he'd remembered what we'd learned in our Molotov-cocktail class—that fire will make windows explode outward. He started hurling stones to shatter the glass and release the pressure. While he probably prevented the children from getting hurt, Fisi came away from the incident with a different lesson: as soon as he, a Kosovar Albanian, began throwing rocks, an American cameraman turned his lens on Fisi and scolded him for taking part in ethnic violence. "He put the videotape on file," Fisi told me, "and labelled it 'Vandal.' " ♦


When he dreamed of playing in the majors,
you didn't just give him seats behind home plate.
You gave him batting practice with Sosa
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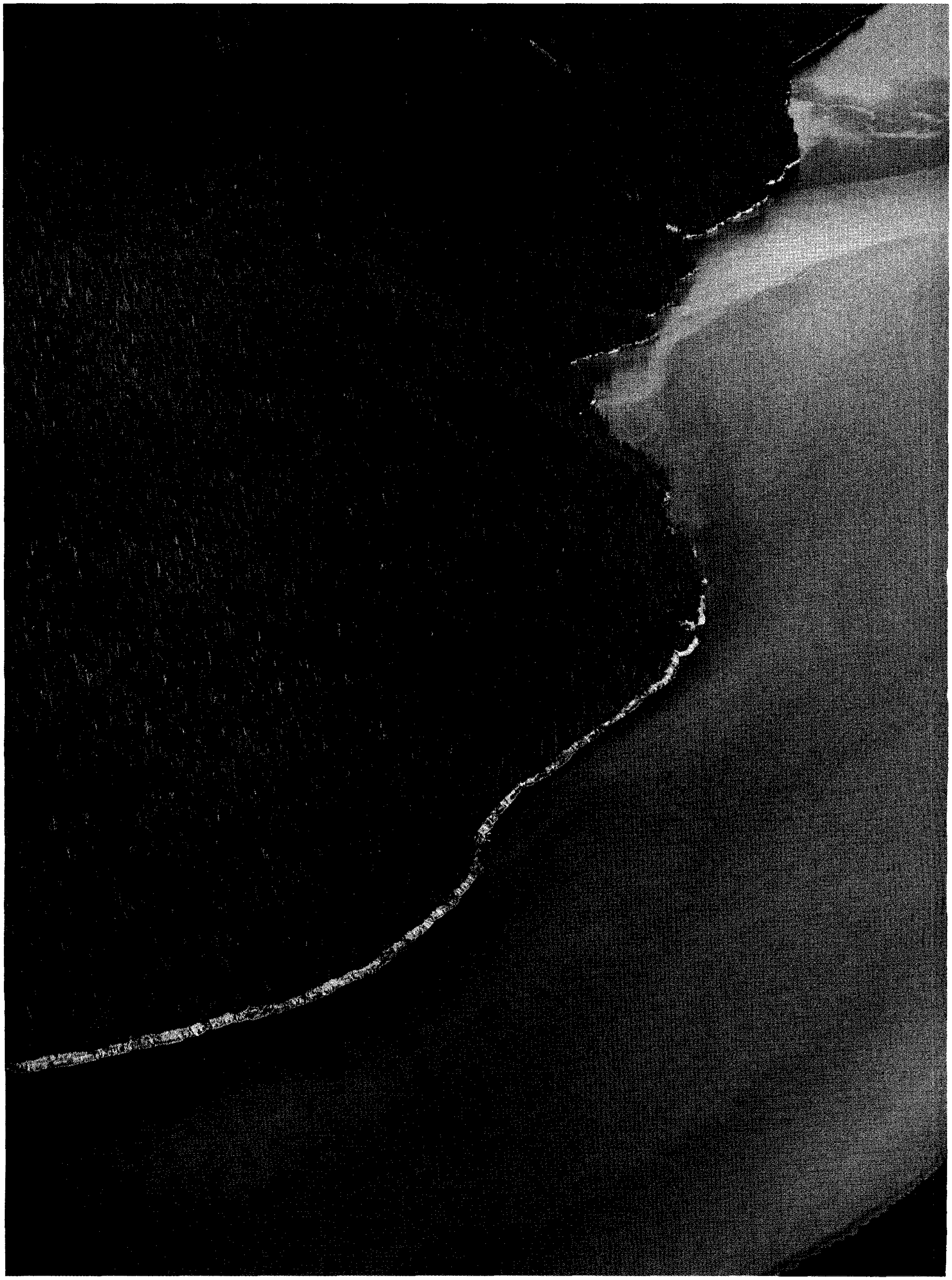
Wish kid John, Age 10



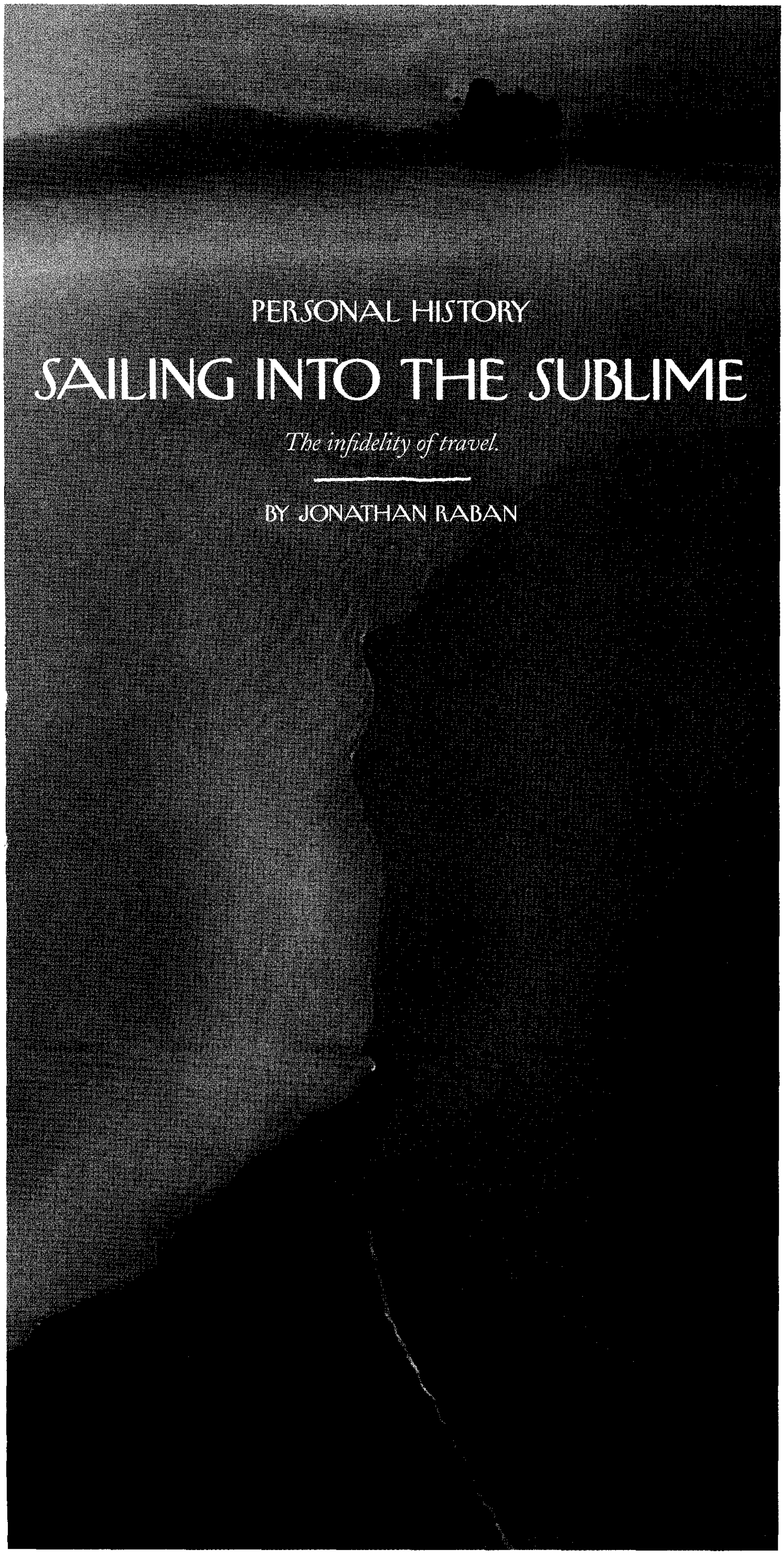
I hoped to come to terms with the attraction that draws people to put themselves afloat on the cold and frightening sea. "Meditation and

PERSONAL HISTORY

SAILING INTO THE SUBLIME

The infidelity of travel.

BY JONATHAN RABAN



water are wedded forever," Melville wrote. Photograph by Diane Cook and Len Jenshel.

ON April Fool's Day, I sat with my daughter at the top of the stairs and heard myself talking in a voice I despised.

"It's O.K., Julia. I'll come home again to see you in twenty-one days. In a floatplane. I'll bring a special present for you."

That overstressed singsong, those audible hyphens between syllables. . . . The lines sounded to me like "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star" tapped out, uncertainly, on a toy xylophone.

"Twenty-one days!"

"Jaybird, that's not long—"

Plink, plonk. Plonk, plonk. Plink.

Travelling nearly always entails infidelity. You do your best to mask the feeling of sly triumph that comes with turning your back on home and all it stands for; but disappearing into the crowd in the departure lounge, or stowing your bags in the car at dawn, you know you're a rat. I was an experienced deserter, but never until now had I been squarely faced with my treachery.

The colors in Julia's face had run together. Lower lip thrust forward, eyes brimming, she stared down into the carpeted green depths of the stairwell; she seemed suffused with her own powerlessness. She didn't have a vote on this, and at three and a half she had no idea of how to gain suffrage.

Then, suddenly, she found a voice—a tone-perfect echo of my own. Matching my singsong delivery, cadence for cadence, she said, "I don't mind, I won't miss you. I love Mommy more than you."

"Julia—" said Jean, her mother.

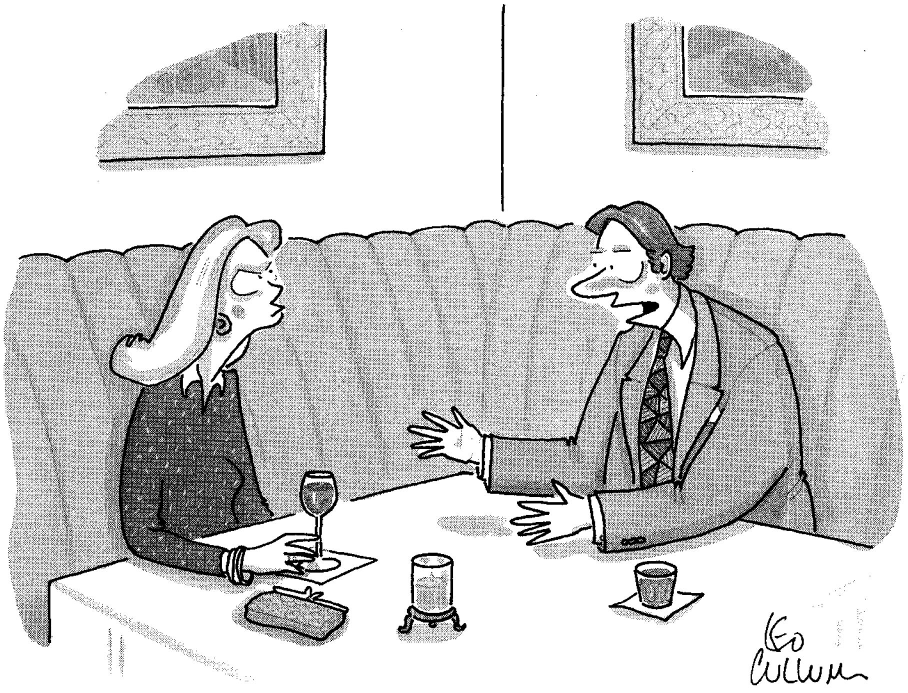
She squirmed behind me on the top stair and pressed her face into the small of my back. "I kiss you," she said, measuring each word, "because I love you. But I won't mind when you're not here. I'll be glad."

She was talking like a grownup, her words at war with her face. I'd always known that it would come, of course, but never thought it could come so early—this milestone moment when parent and child first find themselves speaking to each other through protective masks.

"Julia, I have to go. I'll be thinking of you every day, and I'll be home soon. I promise."

She gazed back, bleakly skeptical, knowing otherwise.

I called my parents in England. My father, a retired Anglican priest, was busy planning an adventure of his own. In the summer, he and my mother would be fly-



"My only crime, Denise, was loving you too much. That and embezzling your trust fund."

• •

ing to Minneapolis, renting a car, and driving across the West to visit us here in Seattle. He wished me luck on my trip, and we piled into my Jeep. For Julia's sake, I had arranged a going-away party down at the boat; two of her friends and their parents were meeting us at noon for soda pop, champagne, cheese, and brownies. A front was moving in from the ocean. Under a spongy sky, a thin precipitation, more mist than rain, furred the outlines of Phinney Ridge and Queen Anne Hill.

At the boat, Julia's glum mood was instantly erased by the sight of her friends. She became the proud curator of a cabinet of wonders. "We've got a toilet on our boat," she announced, and led Zoë and Natalie downstairs to admire the yawning porcelain bowl, the fine pump handle, and the screw-top inlet valve that took two hands to turn. Under her instruction, the children flushed the head a dozen times—rapt hydrophiles, engrossed by the swirl and gurgle of water in the bowl. Then they set up camp on the double bed in the forecabin, smearing the sheets with chocolate brownies, and leaving behind them a faint musk, like the smell of bruised apples, that lingered in the cabin for days afterward.

Shoehorned into the saloon because of the weather, the adults sat elbow to elbow around the table, nipped warily at the Veuve Clicquot, and made station-platform small talk, until the children tumbled in, roaring, from the forecabin.

With difficulty—a lost shoe, a missing pacifier, a hunt among the bedclothes for abandoned stuffed animals—we shifted the farewell party onto the dock, where the precipitation had hardened into drizzle. I got the engine going, unwrapped the ropes from their cleats, kissed Julia and her mother goodbye, and eased the boat astern.

MORE heartsore than elated, I motored down the Ship Canal, maritime Seattle's Main Street, a long, wide boulevard of ships and sheds, drydocks, cranes, riggers, marine railways, and fish-packing outfits. From the canal, you'd think the city's only business was to go to sea. Ballard, on the north bank, was the Scandinavian fishermen's quarter. The flags of Norway, Sweden, and Denmark flew over Market Street, and the Olsons and Johnsons could buy lutefisk at the neighborhood deli. For months on end, in house after house, there'd be a picture of Dad's boat on the wall; the weekly phone call, patched through by radio; the eking out and scraping by until settlement day and the father's return.

Small wonder, then, that the boats at Fishermen's Terminal had homesick names. The man who named his boat after his wife could take her name, at least, to sea, where it would daily be on many people's lips. So the growly male voice calling over the VHF—"Gilda? Gilda? This is Bettijean, Bettijean"—was making a necessary assertion of the survival of the intimate world of the family in the face of the rising wind and climbing sea.

My boat was it, not she. Its first purchaser had given the boat a woman's name, sign-painted, with curlicues, across the stern. But the name meant so little to me that it would take me a moment—a catch of breath—to recall it. It was, typically, the name of somebody's wife or girlfriend, and, anyway, the couple had probably split up by now. Whenever possible, I preferred to identify the boat by its Washington State registration number, Whiskey November Eleven Ninety-six Romeo Bravo—a suitably complex mouthful for a complex lozenge of space that held three rooms, a shower-toilet, a honeycomb of concealed lockers, an engine compartment, a center cockpit, a wraparound deck, two masts, and a suit of sails. As Whiskey November et cetera, it had a rational particularity that went nicely with its intended function. Built in Sweden in 1972 as a smart cruising ketch, expensively outfitted in varnished mahogany and teak, it had deteriorated in the six years of my ownership into a comfortably down-at-heel floating cottage, cluttered with books and pictures, box files, two manual typewriters, furry animals, wine, curling manuscripts, dead ballpoint pens, and all the rest of the impedimenta of a singularly untidy writer's life.

At Ballard Locks, the boat had to drop twenty-plus feet to reach the tidewater of Puget Sound. The sky was beginning to brighten. A small sun showed dimly through the cloud, like a tarnished dime, and the water ahead was silvered with light. A fitful southerly breeze was wrinkling the sea into wavelets that peaked but did not break. At the fairway buoy, I killed the engine and unrolled the headsail, letting the boat drift at a speed that could have been comfortably outstripped by a very old lady on a bicycle.

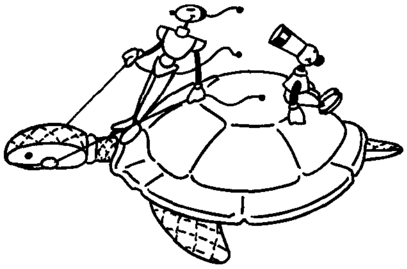
The interest here lay not on the surface but in what was happening underneath. The depth sounder, bouncing ultrasonic impulses off the seafloor, was the thing to watch. At the fairway buoy, it showed forty-six feet. Then it began to spool through the numbers—seventy-one feet, ninety-eight, a hundred and three, a hundred and twenty-seven, a hundred and sixty-five—the bottom falling away, a ragged underwater cliff. At around two hundred feet, the depth sounder lost contact with the ground and, pleading helplessness, gibbered random numbers until I switched it off. The chart took over now: half a mile from shore, I floated over the fifty-fathom contour; another half-mile and the hundred-fathom line was crossed. Six hundred feet. The bottom kept falling. After ghosting along for less than half an hour, I was in a hundred and fifty fathoms, and the water still deepening. Like a bug planting its feet on surface tension, the boat was precariously aloft above a drowned Rift Valley.

I was following the Inside Passage to Alaska, the route taken by the Seattle fishing fleet on its annual depredations of the surviving stock of Pacific salmon, halibut, crab, and herring—a route first surveyed and charted by George Vancouver in 1792 and 1793 in the Discovery, an expedition got up by the Admiralty. Vancouver—known behind his back as Captain Van—was short, fat, bald, and apoplectic; the unpopular captain of an unhappy ship. At thirty-five, he was a prematurely old man, out of touch with the newly fashionable Romanticism of the age. His taste was rooted in the early, Augustan half of the eighteenth century; the man who attached his name to great swaths of Pacific Northwest wilderness deplored wilderness as ugly, disorderly, and barren. Sailing these sheltered waters, he came face to face with a vision of chaos in nature and in his own nature. On my own trip, Captain Van would be my chief companion, in the pages of the four-volume, blue-cloth-and-gilt Hakluyt Society edition of his "Voyage." On board I also had the accounts of Captain Cook, Peter Puget (Vancouver's lieutenant), Archibald Menzies (Vancouver's official naturalist), and, from Spain, Alessandro Malaspina and Dionisio Alcalá Galiano. Each had his own voice and, looking at the same stretch of water, saw it in different terms from the others. To travel with these men, in their knee boots and frogged waistcoats, was to be in on a continuous quarrelsome seminar about the character of the new sea.

I was going not to fish but to catch reflections in this dark and soupy water—reflections left there by the Indians, by Vancouver and his officers, by the missionaries, settlers, loggers, fishermen, and tourists who had sailed before me. I hoped to come to terms, somehow, with the peculiar attraction that draws people to put themselves afloat on the deep, dark, indifferent, cold, and frightening sea. "Meditation and water are wedded forever," Melville wrote. So, for the term of a fishing season, I meant to meditate on the sea, at sea.

I moved from London to Seattle in 1990, and the sea was part of the reason. The Inside Passage to Alaska, with its outer fringes and entailments, is an extraordinarily complicated sea route. In continuous use for several thousand years, it is now a buoyed and lighted marine freeway, a thousand miles long, and in places choked with traffic, as fishing boats, tows, barges, yachts, and cruise ships follow its serpentine course between Puget Sound and the Alaskan Panhandle. Parts of it are open ocean, parts no wider than a modest river. Some bits, like the Strait of Georgia, are small muddy seas in their own right; others are sunken chasms, twelve hundred feet deep. Where the tide is squeezed between rocks and islands, it boils and tumbles through these passes in a fire-hose stream. Water wasn't meant to travel at sixteen knots: it turns into a liquid chaos of violent overfalls, grotesque mushroom boils. On an island in midstream, you can feel the rock underfoot shuddering, as if at any minute the sea might dislodge it and bowl the island, end over end, down the chute.

Its aboriginal past—still tantalizingly close—puts the Inside Passage on terms of kinship with the ancient sea of the Phoenicians and the Greeks. A nineteenth-century Tsimshian Indian would have found it easy to adapt to Homer's sea, with its reigning winds and creaturely powers. He simply used other names for them. For homicidal tricksters like Zeus and Poseidon, he had had such counterparts as Raven, Killer Whale, Halibut. High mountains and impenetrable forests crowded in on the coastal Indians and kept them within yards of the sea. The water was safer, more easily travelled, more productive than the surrounding land. The Indians lived in a maritime culture centered on the lavishly painted cedar canoe. Babies had canoe-shaped cradles; the privileged were dispatched in canoe-coffins.



The shelf at the front of the forecabin, the driest place, was where I stored books of Indian art—Salish, Kwakiutl, Haida, Tsimshian, and Tlingit. Inside were representations of creatures of the sea and coast—some familiar, like whales, bears, frogs, halibut, sea lions, cormorants, octopi; some unknown to natural history, fantastic sea-dwelling composites like Nagunakas, who reached up from the ocean bottom and grabbed a canoeful of fishermen, then held them prisoner for four years in his octopus's garden. The more I looked at these pictures, the more I saw that Northwest Indian art was maritime in much more than its subject matter. Its whole conception was based in an experience of water. The rage for symmetry, for images paired with their doubles, arises, surely, from a daily acquaintance with mirror reflections: the canoe and its inverted twin, on a sheltered inlet in the stillness of dusk. The typical unit of composition, found in the art of all the tribes along the Inside Passage, was the ovoid shape: it was exactly that of the tiny capillary wave raised by a cat's-paw of wind as it catches the light. And the art's most arresting feature—dismembered creatures, their parts scattered into different quarters of a large design—mimicked the way in which a ripple smashes a reflection into an abstract of fragmentary images.

The saloon of my boat was dominated by the eighteenth-century white explorers—intruders from the Age of Reason, for whom measurement, with their quadrants, chronometers, and magnetic compasses, was a form of taking possession. They squared up the Inside Passage with a grid of longitudes and latitudes derived from the Royal Observatory, at Greenwich, and the equator. They covered their emerging charts of the sea with names: naming it after themselves, their ships, their patrons, their national historic dates and occasions. The animist sea of the Indians was reinvented by the Europeans in the image of their own age.

I HAD discovered this labyrinth of islands and inlets by a stroke of idle luck. In 1989, a chance conversation with a businessman in rural Alabama led me to post myself to Seattle for six weeks, because it sounded like an interesting city in which to set a chapter of the book I was writing. Facing a lonely Thanksgiving Day in a rented room on Second Avenue, I took the ferry from Seattle to Victoria, British Columbia. It was a blustery morning, the empty streets streaming like rivers, stoplights tossing on their overhead wires. Elliott Bay was close-ribbed with whitecaps. A perfect day for seagoing, if you were boarding a vessel as big as the Vancouver Island Princess, a waddling tub of a ship, built in Glasgow in 1955 and a salt-caked veteran of heavy weather.

As soon as we were clear of the city, I clambered up the outside companionway to the wheelhouse to bother the captain. But it was like the meeting of Bouvard and Pécuchet. No sooner had we exchanged names than we were reaching into our wallets for snapshots of our respective sailboats. The mate, evidently used to his boss's strange addiction, took over the wheel and nursed the ferry through the chop, while the captain began pulling out a dozen charts on which to show me the delights of his home waters.

There—he rapped the paper with a meaty forefinger—the tide ran at sixteen knots at springs. *There* he'd ridden on the lip of a whirlpool three metres deep. *Here* was a favorite winter anchorage. *There* were miles of estuarine shallows, where the sea kicked up in southeasterly winds, and where he once nearly lost his boat. I had never seen charts on which land and sea were so intricately tangled, in a looping scribble of blue and beige.

Just then the captain spotted a pod of orcas cavorting in the murk, a mile or so off. After instructing the mate to alter course, he announced the whales over the ferry's P.A. system. The rush of passengers to the windows gave the ship a sudden ten-degree list as we stumbled through the sea to take a closer look.

A few minutes later, we passed a sailboat wallowing in confused seas off Marrowstone Island, spray pluming from its bow as it shouldered its way through the breakers. The captain gazed on it fondly through binoculars. "They've got three knots of tide under them through there, maybe a tad more. See how short and steep that sea is?" His binoculars still trained on the sailboat, he added, "Someone isn't happy on that boat."

Past the lighthouse on Point Wilson, the water seethed like a pan of boiling milk. High conical waves smashed into one another, raising a thick penumbra of spray overhead.

I loved the sense of being so close to the city, yet so far out on this magnificently eventful sea, with its wild creatures and mazy channels. I thought, If I lived in Seattle, I'd keep a boat of my own, and sail it to where the tide ran at sixteen knots at springs, and where there were whirlpools ten feet deep. I'd live on a sane frontier between nature and civilization, with one foot in the water, the other in a metropolis of restaurants and bookstores. I'd read and write in the mornings, and run away to sea in the afternoons.

A few days later, I set about changing all the "I would"s into "I shall"s.

DAWN the next morning was damp, still, gauze-gray. The needle on the barograph drum had fallen steadily overnight and now was sinking past the thousand-millibar line into the foul-weather nine-nineties. Waiting for the kettle to come to the boil, I turned on NOAA Weather Radio and listened to the forecast for Camano Island to Point Roberts.

"Small-craft advisory: winds, southwest, ten to twenty knots, rising to twenty-five to thirty knots in the afternoon; rain changing to showers." The affectless male voice might have added that by afternoon, with the ebb tide running full tilt into a near gale, the sea would be heaped and growling, every wave baring its teeth. The vernacular translation of small-craft advisory is "You will be cold, wet, and scared. You will curse yourself for having been fool enough to leave home."

There was no wind when I started out. The smooth surface of the water was tooled with scrolls and curlicues of current. The sea had the same faint scent of putrescence which greets you upon opening the door of the fridge after a three-week absence. The water was thick and dusty. Always reluctant to mirror even the bluest sky, it had a stubborn residual color of its own—a scummy, dark, greenish gray.

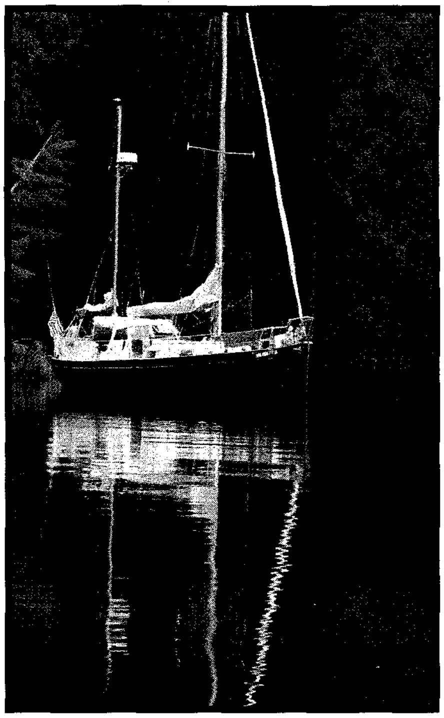
Nursing a mug of coffee in the cockpit, I left the steering to the autopilot and watched the world slide by in fifty shades of gray. A tug was hauling a low island of logs crabwise across the tide. A freight train supplied the only trace of green in the entire landscape as it inched along the trestles at the edge of the beach. The chimneys of derelict pulp mills stood out against the trees, and miles of condo blocks and gated retirement communities showed as a disfiguring rash of pale spots in the hills. Yet from this sea distance it was extraordinary how little the land had altered since Captain Van projected onto it his vision of a genteel Augustan future. After a hundred and fifty years of white settlement, it still looked like a forest—a badly vandalized forest, it's true, but a forest nonetheless.

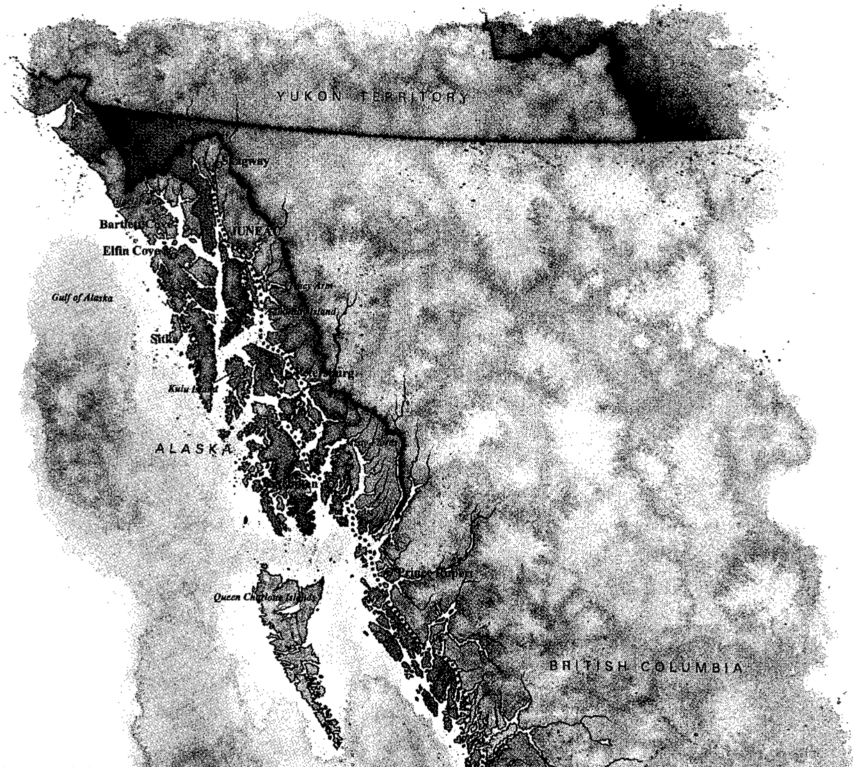
The gardeners of the Northwest spend a great deal of their time trying to fight off the encroaching forest. In this moist and temperate climate, fir, salal, alder, fern, and salmonberry swarm over every inch of untended ground. If some disaster hit—if Boeing and Microsoft both went bust—it wouldn't be long, a few months at most, before the advance troops of vine and bramble took over the highways and strip malls, closely followed by an occupying army of young Douglas firs. In less than half a human lifetime, the place would be back to wilderness again. Here, more than anywhere else I know, the tenure of civilization appears unexpectedly provisional and insecure. Squint and you might, for all intents and purposes, be back in 1792, looking out on a nature that still awaited men with grandiose designs.

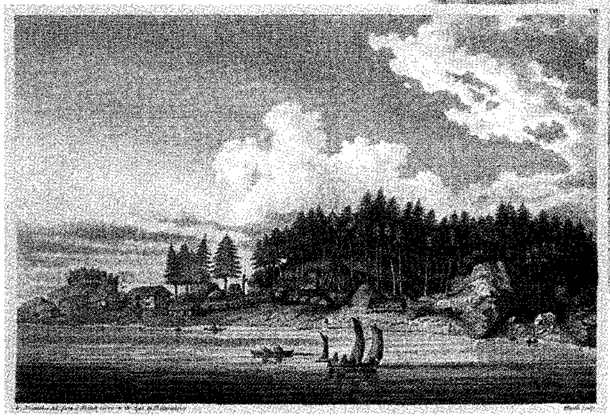
The sea in Saratoga Passage frosted over, and the forecast wind began to fill in from the south. The wrinkled skin of the water became ridged with breaking wavelets; in less than half an hour, the waves were steep, regular, well formed, hard-driven by the building wind. At my back, I could hear the forward rush of each new wave, then its sudden, violent collapse in a brushfire crackle of foam. Hauling on the wheel, driving the boat downwind as it tried to slew broadside on, I was on a jittery high. I hadn't had such sailing in many months. The three-step waltzing motion of the boat, the throbbing, strings-and-percussion sound of wind and water on the move came back to me as an old, deep pleasure. But a pleasure tinged, as always, with an edge of incipient panic.

Lieutenant Joseph Whidbey, who sailed this way in the Discovery's cutter, noted with excitement that the ebb tide ran north. Lost in a coastal labyrinth, he had thought he was following yet another dead end to its muddy conclusion, but the north-going tide promised a way out. He followed the drift, expecting to find a passage through which he could lead the Discovery back into the open sea.

The ebb was running for me, as for him. Toward its northern end, the broad bight of ruffled water was studded with islets—irregular chunks of rock, each one just big enough to support a blackberry







Clockwise, from above: Whiskey November, the author's "floating cottage"; the Inside Passage, charted by Captain George Vancouver in 1792-93; an engraving of an Alaskan cove by an artist on board the Discovery.

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: COURTESY JONATHAN RABAN; MIKE REAGAN; MARINER'S MUSEUM

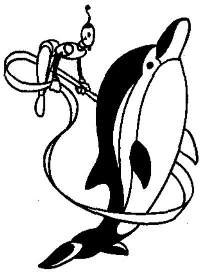
bush or a stunted pine—and the tide ran hard between them. As the boat rounded the point ahead, Whidbey's anticipated passage slid around the corner into view. He must have found it difficult to believe his eyes. The tide was pouring down a funnel-shaped corridor, steep wooded bluffs rising on either side. At the far end, a little over a mile off, there was a hairline crack, like a white thread in a bolt of dark cloth. At least fifty square miles of sea were somehow draining through a slot that looked hardly wide enough to squeeze a rowboat between its rocky jaws.

I turned back from the gathering surge of disturbed water and circled the approach, waiting for the ebb to weaken. Whidbey, already late for his rendezvous with Vancouver, went ahead to take a closer look. He reported back that he had been duped by the tide: the passage was shallow, fouled with large boulders, turbulent in the extreme, navigable only by the smallest boats, and then only at slack water. Captain Van named the place Deception Passage.

I spent much of the nineteen-seventies trying not to buy a lava lamp—colored chaos in a bottle. A prisoner of my insecure good taste, I feared the snobbish derision of friends if one were suddenly to appear in my sitting room. The lamps became fixtures in English pubs, and I consoled myself by perching on a stool and furtively communing with those iridescent, endlessly mutating lemon-yellow, green, and puce globules as they rolled tumescently behind glass. "Obscene" was the usual adjective, but I found them beautiful. Deception Pass was like a lava lamp on a heroic scale. As the tide entered the funnel, it felt the tightening constraint of the land; the bottom shallowed, and house-size boulders tripped the water up and made it tumble. With far too much sea trying to escape through far too small an aperture, liquid panic broke out. The obstructed tide welled up vertically in mushroom-topped boils a dozen yards across or spun impotently around in great saucer-shaped eddies. Everything was on the move on its own eccentric curvilinear track. Keeping even a small patch of water in focus for more than a few seconds was like trying to hold in the mind's eye the sum of movements made by couples doing the quickstep in a crowded, old-fashioned ballroom, as they dodged, twisted, swerved, twirled, and went spinning off at tangents to each other.

ONCE upon a time, people made their way across the sea by reading the surface, shapes, and colors of the water. On clear nights, they took their directions from the stars; by day, they sailed by the wind and waves. Wind made itself most useful for navigational purposes by generating swells. Whatever the fickle gusts of the moment, the prevailing seasonal wind was registered in the stubborn movement of the sea. Swell continues for many days, and sometimes thousands of miles, after the wind that first raised it has blown itself out. Islands, because they deflect the direction of swell, can be "felt" from a great distance by a sensitive pilot.

Sailing with no instruments, the primitive navigator knew his local sea in the same unself-conscious way that a farmer knows his fields. The stars supplied a grand chart of paths across the known ocean, but there was often little need of these since the water itself was as legible as acreage farmed for generations. Here, where you feel the intersection of two swells, each deflected by islands far over the horizon, you make your turn. Now you search for toake, the tropic bird, and follow its homeward flight until the sea begins to brown with sand.



The arrival of the magnetic compass caused a fundamental rift in the relationship between man and sea. Europeans were sailing with compasses in the eleventh century, and may have used them even earlier. Once the compass became established on the quarterdeck, snug in its wooden binnacle, the whole focus of the helmsman shifted, from the sea itself to an instrument eighteen inches or so under his nose. Suddenly he no longer needed to intuit the meaning of the waves; he had become a functionary, whose job was to keep the ship at an unvarying angle to the magnetized pointer with its scrolled "N." First he steered by letters, E by S, W by N; later, by numbers assigned him by the officer of the watch. Holding the bow to the sea at a steady hundred and ninety degrees, the helmsman was performing a task that eventually would be done more efficiently by a machine.

Aboard the Discovery were the latest Admiralty-approved compasses, quadrants, chronometers, artificial horizons (trays filled with mercury to catch the reflections of sun, moon, and stars), peloruses, engraved horn protractors, dividers, rulers—all the instruments necessary for reducing the globe to a two-dimensional mesh of intersecting lines. White invaders from the Age of Reason burst into an Indian world of primitive, animist, sensory navigation. Naval ships and cedar canoes, though afloat in the same water, were sailing on two different seas.

From the quarterdeck, movements of canoes were closely watched, though no one could figure what they were up to. Canoes passing and repassing, noted Captain Van, when the Discovery lay at anchor not far from a big Indian village. Full of obscure purpose, they paddled out to an arbitrary point in midstream, stopped for half an hour, then paddled off at another angle. They darted and scuttled, continually changing course for no apparent reason. Their insectlike motion, observed through the officers' spyglasses, gave rise to many alarms: the Indians were about to attack; they were curious; they were fishing; they were visiting their neighbors; they were preparing an ambush.

Many years later, when white settlers began to travel aboard Indian canoes as passengers, they continued to be baffled by the strange, slow, halting progress of even the simplest voyage. The natives apparently had no idea of how to get from A to B without making detours to L, P, and Y. The whites expected their canoe to go in a straight line, a compass course, from departure point to destination, and could not fathom why Indian pilots should insist on frittering away time in a succession of stops, starts, and unnecessary diversions.

The Bostonian James Swan lived on Shoalwater Bay—now Willapa Bay—on the Washington coast, in 1852. Bluff and easygoing, he greatly admired the seamanship and boatbuilding skills of the Quinault Indians with whom he settled, yet even he grew impatient with the stop-go style of Indian navigation. He described a typical day:

> When in the canoe, all hands will paddle vehemently, and one would suppose the journey would be speedily accomplished, the canoe seeming almost to fly. This speed will be kept up for a hundred rods, when they cease paddling, and all begin talking. Perhaps one has spied something, which he has to describe while the rest listen; or another thinks of some funny anecdote or occurrence that has transpired among the Indians they have been visiting, that has to be related; or they are passing some remarkable tree, or cliff, or stone, which has a legend attached to it, and which the old folks never can pass without relating to the young, who all give the most respectful attention. When the tale is over, the steersman gives the word "*Que-nuk, que-nuk, whid-tuck*" (now, now, hurry), when all again paddle away with a desperate energy for a few minutes, and then the same scene is again enacted.

On land, the whites took copious notes on almost everything the Indians did, from cooking to basketwork. They painstakingly described the construction of cedar canoes and fishing gear. But once the canoes were afloat some affliction descended on these industrious amateur ethnologists, who suddenly went blind to the details of native navigation, except to complain about its failure to acknowledge the self-evident supremacy of the straight line.

Two world views were in collision; and the poverty of white accounts of these canoe journeys reflects the colonialists' blindness to the native sea. They didn't get it—couldn't grasp the fact that for Indians the water was a place, and the great bulk of the surrounding land mere undifferentiated space.

TWILIGHT and I had reached the summer resort of Blind Channel, on West Thurlow Island, midway up the eastern side of Vancouver Island. The picture windows of the waterside restaurant framed bosomy snowdrifts of furniture, dust-sheeted for winter. The shop-cum-post office was dark, and no lights showed in the nearby house. The only sign of life was the drone of an electrical generator in a whitewashed shed. In the gloaming, it took a little while to detect the object of my visit, a B.C. TEL satellite pay phone shrouded in bushes up a dirt path.

Most likely, the owners were sunning themselves on the beaches at Waikiki, and that evening I was the only inhabitant of the island. My big problem was the distance—no more than a hundred feet up that dirt path—that yawned between me and the phone, on which I had promised to call Jean and Julia.

My instincts were to stay with the boat (I've always been scared of large mammals, and West Thurlow Island, out of season, looked to me like prime bear country), but I meant to keep my promise. I unhooked my ship's bell from its mounting and advanced slowly up the path, clanging the bell like a medieval leper and listening, between each mournful tintinnabulation, for the sound of heavy crashing in the brush. A panicked wren fled a patch of salal. The only other wild inhabitant I met was a fat banana slug. At the phone, I dug for change with one hand and shook the bell at the wilderness with the other. Like a triton shell, the phone had the sound of the sea in it. I fed a fistful of quarters into the slot. The surf continued to break on the faraway coast.

"Hello? Operator?"

But no one was hiding in the static.

I walked back to the boat, jangled the bell morosely, and cursed B.C. TEL, as Blind Channel lived up to its name. Remembering stories of how bears regularly boarded boats, lured by the tantalizing scent of domestic garbage, I locked the hatch against ursine burglars.

The wind arrived at midnight, waking me with the sudden, urgent hammering of a loose halyard against the mast. In the drumskin interior, the vibrating halyard took on a thunderous resonance. With each gust, it whanged louder and faster, until I was forced to fix it. Throwing a parka over my naked shoulders, I went out barefoot with a knife and a coil of shock cord. Stubbing a toe on the iron cleat amidships, I added a wolfish howl of my own to the varied noises of the night.

I WAS awake again at dawn. I twiddled my way through the wavelengths on the bedside radio, but it was as empty of voices as the satellite pay phone. Hemmed in by high islands, I was in a radiophonic black hole. But the wind snuck through. Fierce squalls raced across the width of the whitening channel and heeled the boat hard against the dock. The fenders squealed. The mooring ropes, sounding thin and taut, sawed against the fairleads. With nowhere to go, I settled down to enjoy my enforced leisure on this wild morning. I lit the lamps, put the kettle on to boil, and to counter the noise of the discordant ship's orchestra plugged in a tape of Mozart's Clarinet Quintet in A. First the violins, joined by cello and viola, made a hesitant, exploratory descent into the bass, where they discovered the clarinet, sounding as fresh and wild as the pipes of Pan. In 1789, the clarinet was still something of a vulgar novelty, and Mozart was another figure living on the cusp of the Romantic revolution. Hearing his music framed by all the noises of the boat in a small gale, I found I was listening to the clarinet as the symbol of that unfettered liberty to which Mozart's late work seems always to be gesturing, pointing the way to Beethoven and beyond.

I began translating the previous day's forecast into an intelligible weather map. An intense low was bearing down on Vancouver Island from the west. The front had been predicted to cross the island, but it seemed to have stalled on the outer coast.

The wind harped in the shrouds. I exercised the rule of thumb known as Buys Ballot's law: if you stand facing the wind, you'll find the low-pressure center somewhere to your right—between eight and twelve compass points to your right. That put my low in the general direction of Cape Scott—a hungry void spinning counterclockwise, sucking great draughts of air into itself as it came trundling inland from the ocean. On a fresh page of the logbook, I sketched the coastline and drew a nest of whorled isobars on top of Vancouver Island, the winds draining into it like bathwater going down a plughole. In a pleasant daze of Mozart and mapmaking, I took several moments to register that an intruder was thumping purposefully on the hull. Bear! I thought, and leaped for the now open companionway.

A man in a yellow rain slicker stood by the cockpit: the resort's owner, demanding the fifteen-dollar fee for overnight moorage. So certain was I of my solitude here that I could only gape in silence at this Man Friday apparition.

I mumbled about no-lights-on-in-the-house and didn't-realize-anyone-was-here, but could see this wasn't cutting much ice. The man's eyes were looking not at me but at the cockpit seat, where I had parked my leper's bell.

I went downstairs to hunt for my wallet. The trio section had just begun. I switched it off and resolved to reappear as an ordinarily personable being, in full possession of his wits. But nothing I said seemed to dent the impression made by my bell-ringing activities the night before. The man's expression condemned me as a nutcase, to be handled at cautious arm's length. His manner, as he wrote out the receipt, was studiedly remote. When I plied him with questions, he answered with uninflected monosyllables.

"Can you open the store for me?"

He checked his wristwatch and said, "Noon."

"Can I mail stuff from here?"

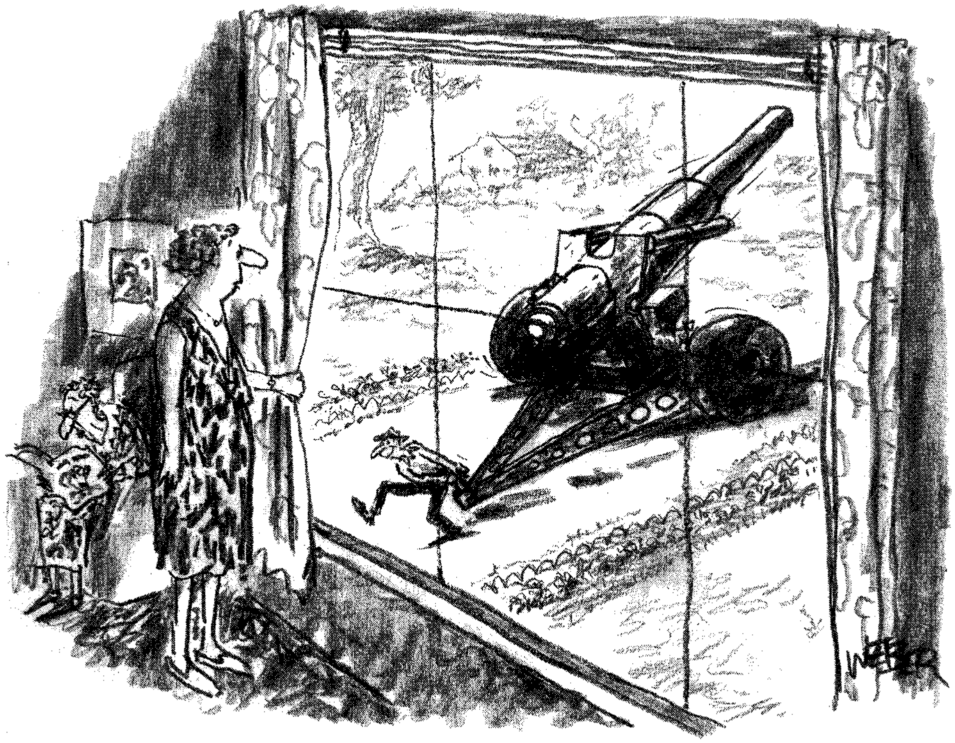
"Mail plane. Tomorrow."

"Thanks," I said.

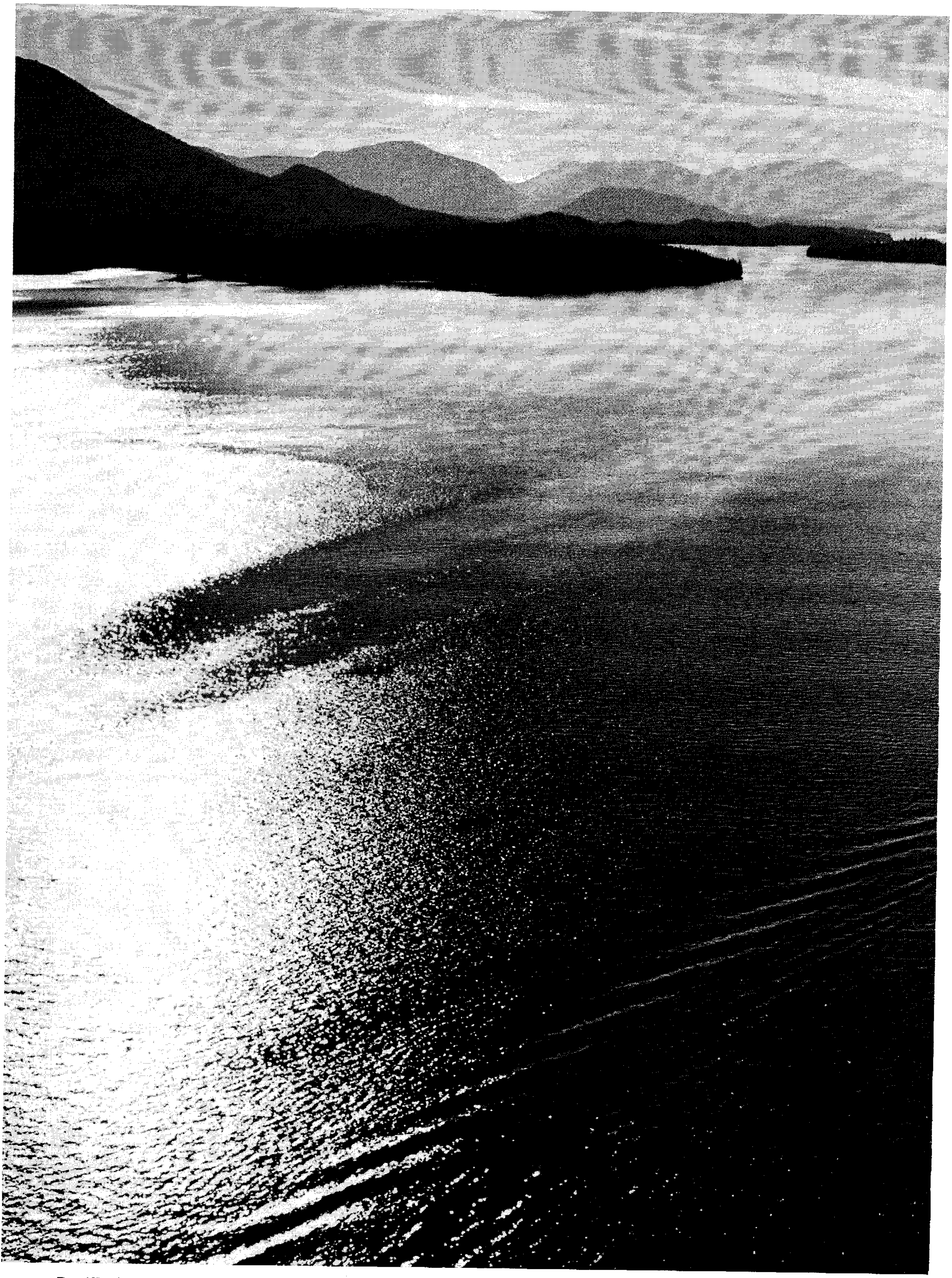
"Welcome," he said.

Pining for conversation, I found myself an outcast on the island, where my unsavory reputation had got abroad. A woman on a bike, pedalling between the house and the resort, abruptly changed course at the sight of me and found urgent business to attend to in her vegetable patch.

VANCOUVER explored the mainland coast of the Strait of Georgia for ten days and hated it. The landscape was ugly, intimidating, inhospitable, and useless. He instinctively recoiled from the sight of the dizzy precipice and the top-

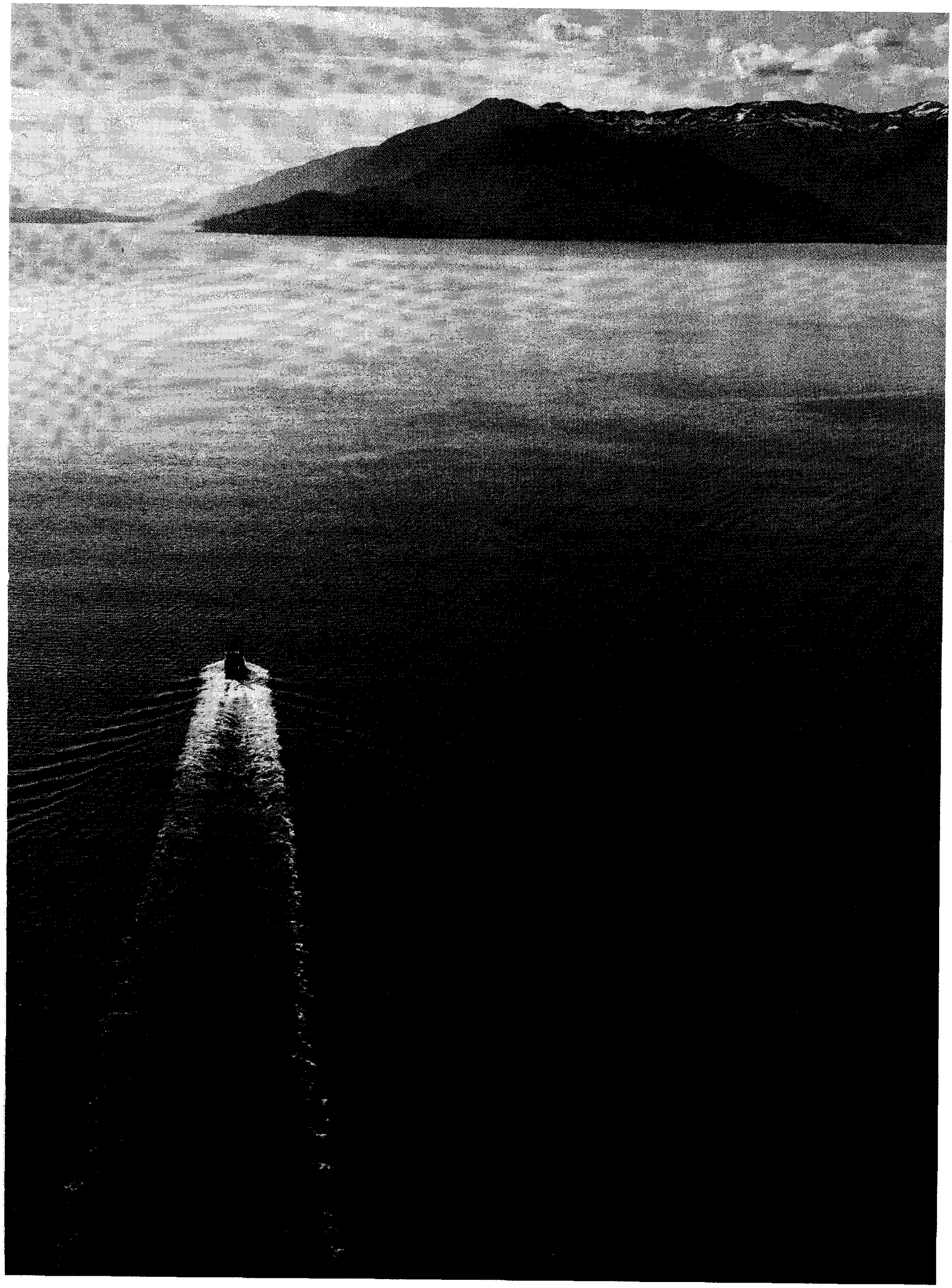


"I see Daddy's back from the gun show."

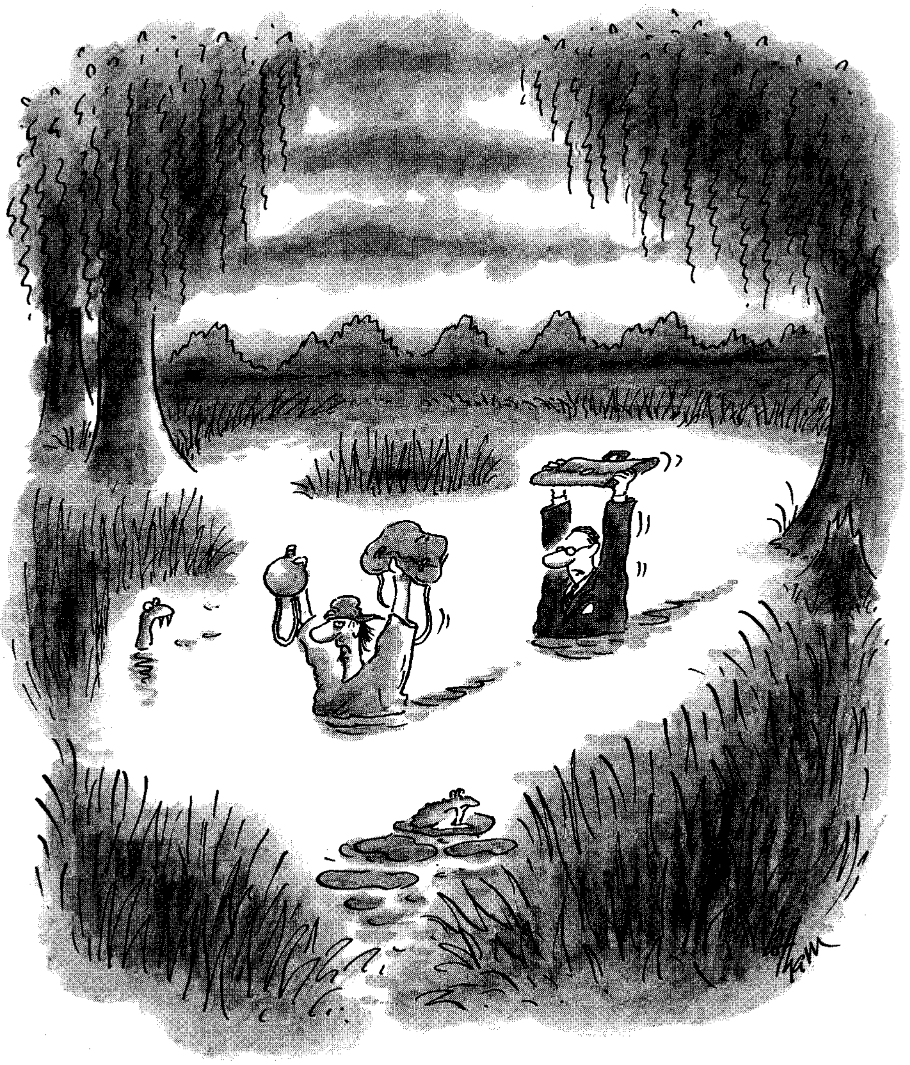


DIANE COOK & LEN JENSHEL

Revillagigedo Channel, British Columbia: "I had to listen to the creaking machinery of my own reason as I thought, not felt,



ny way through the rising waves, trying to figure out what on earth I'd do when the mast snapped off at the root."



"Leeches don't bother me—I'm a lawyer."

• •

pling crag: affronts to his taste for order. Discovery Bay and Puget Sound, with their low hills and forest clearings, had fitted nicely with Vancouver's conservative preconceptions of how nature should be arranged. But in the wild—and getting wilder—geology of the northern end of the Strait of Georgia, he was lost. He deplored the "unfathomable" depths, complained that the roar of the cascades drowned out the birdsong, and was disappointed by the scant, dwarfish vegetation. Working slowly up the coast, Vancouver wrote that he was "disappointed" by what he saw: it was "rugged," "barren," "dull," "sterile," "gloomy," "dreary," "comfortless." Each of these words is used again and again. They were all the colors available on Vancouver's verbal palette for the months of June and July in 1792.

In this, as in much else, Captain Van was out of step. The landscape he found merely depressing roused great excitement among midshipmen and junior officers, who felt that they were actually entering the awe-inspiring realm of the eighteenth-century Sublime—a word never far from their lips as they rowed, in a perpetual dank twilight, between beetle-browed cliffs while the sun lit up snowfields thousands of feet above their heads.

Edmund Burke's 1757 essay "Of the Sublime and Beautiful" carved out an intellectual space for wild nature, as one might encounter it in the English Lake District, the Alps, a tempest at sea, or vast uninhabited tracts of desert and prairie. According to Burke, appreciation of the Sublime began with a proper sense of terror; only terror "is a source of the sublime; that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling." By the seventeen-seventies, the rage for the Sublime was in full swing in the English countryside, where landscape gardeners contrived delicious terrors for their patrons. Sir Richard Hill, Lord of Hawkstone, in Shropshire, finding himself in possession of a newly fashionable precipice with a six-county view, turned his estate into a Sublime theme park. Even Dr. Johnson lugged himself up to the summit, where he drew on Burke's essay to describe his excited state of mind.

The movement had passed Vancouver by. Here on the Northwest Coast, where the ocean sucked and grumbled at the bottom of precipices many times the height of those at Hawkstone, Captain Van was nearly at the heart of the modish Sublime, but nothing in the landscape stirred him to poetry. He found it simply alien, and ideas of the Sublime suspect and pretentious.

In the same months that the English were sailing up the coast, an American fur trader, Joseph Ingraham, was sailing south. Ingraham, in boyishly high spirits, had sounded his way around the Copper Islands the year before—a heart-in-mouth passage even with an engine and a modern chart. According to his journal, Ingraham worked his ship through the darkness in a state of exalted aesthetic wonder:

> There was something awfully sublime in entering this dreary port at this hour of the night. The surrounding high mountains threw an additional gloom over the face of the deep whose vast silence was at times interrupted by the hollow surge of the sea on the surrounding rocky shores or the gamboling of immense whales. On shore the scene afforded a subject which I lament my inability to do justice to. It seemed to inspire a reverential awe for the Almighty, Who presides in all places; but none I believe display His grandeur, power, and elegance more conspicuously than occurrences of the mighty deep.

If only Ingraham could have supplied poor Vancouver with a few grams of whatever he was on, the Discovery would have been a very different vessel.

JOHNSTONE STRAIT was a gully, fifty miles long and a thousand feet deep, between Vancouver Island and a labyrinth of smaller islands to the north. The place had an unpleasant reputation as a wind funnel, but that morning a southeasterly was blowing at a gentle ten to twelve knots, just enough to keep the boat moving nicely under sail. With the sun now breaking through the clouds and silvering the water, the strait was a cheering sight after my string of lonely days: a broad marine highway on which orderly lines of coasters, fishing boats, tugs, and barges were following the posted route between Puget Sound and Alaska.

The boat was travelling much faster than the tide tables said it should. Passing Port Neville, I was sailing through the water at five knots, but the land was going past at eight, or so said the G.P.S. My guess was that I was enjoying the benefit of "slippery water." Seawater, laden with chlorides and minerals, is heavier than fresh. When a river meets the sea, it's liable to spill out in a wide fan across the top of the denser, saline water. So the brackish surface layer of an estuary can move independently of the saltwater tide below, sliding over it in a continuous ebb current. Something like this seemed to be happening now on Johnstone Strait. The boat was riding on the fast surface current, while the true tide rolled sluggishly westward at a knot or less. I dipped a bucket over the side, and tried the water on my tongue: powerfully salty, not brackish at all.

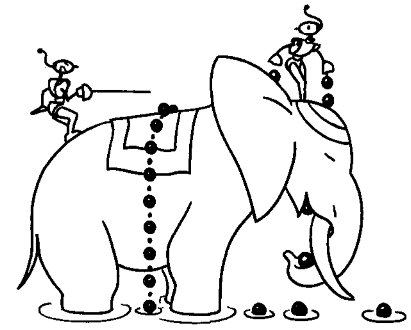
I'd just stowed my bucket when a sudden rush of wind came down the funnel of the strait, like an unprovoked punch. The boat corkscrewed. I feared for the stitching of the sail as the fabric swelled under the impact of the wind, which had begun to yodel nastily in the rigging. In no time at all, the ruffled water changed to a short, steep, breaking sea.

I had meant to go on to Alert Bay, but this wind now nixed that plan. Thirty knots was more than I could safely handle. As the fetch of the strait lengthened, the waves climbed and the boat seesawed over them, crashing into each trough and trying to bury its nose in the wave immediately ahead. Drenched in spray, and by the occasional bucketful of solid green water, I hung on to the wheel, spinning it violently to keep to a more or less steady downwind course. I had too much sail up, but it was too late now to mess around with flailing sheets and furling line. The boat ran away with me, rearing and plunging as if bent on trying to catapult its rider into the sparkling soup.

I had no appetite for this. I had learned to sail too late in life to acquire a real seaman's instinct for what to do when the wind gets up and the sea growls. I had to listen to the creaking machinery of my own reason as I thought, not felt, my way through the rising waves, trying to figure out what on earth I'd do when the mast snapped off at the root, as it surely would, and soon. I remembered some book or other saying that heavy-duty wire cutters were essential on board. I had none. So the forty-six-foot mast, now in the water, trapped by a cat's-cradle of steel rigging, would work on the hull as a battering ram, until it punched a hole in the side and the boat went down in a string of big bubbles. Wrenching the wheel to starboard, hoping to correct the boat's sideways slew down a wave, I could already hear the crunch of the severed mast breaking through into the galley, smashing plates and glasses, letting the sea rush in. I was always the coward, who dies many times before his death. Nine miles on from Port Neville was a merciful gap in the north wall of the strait. I ran for cover, with the boat skidding on a crackling surge of foam. The mast still stood. The sun shone. A seal, basking on a rock, opened an eye at my arrival and slid soundlessly into the calm water, making not a ripple.

THE morning news on the radio was forbidding. An intense low was spinning eastward across the ocean, the Queen Charlotte Islands its likely destination. When it touched land, it was predicted to stall, and to dominate the weather for the foreseeable future, bringing storm and gale-force winds to all sea areas. I was just one day away from crossing Queen Charlotte Sound, the short stretch of open ocean between the top of Vancouver Island and the bottom of the next string of protective coastal islands. Today, already, a four-metre sea was running in the sound. Tomorrow, as the cyclone neared, the sea would start to climb. The waves would be as high as houses. I'd hoped to get halfway to Juneau—to Bella Bella, British Columbia, perhaps—before parking the boat and flying back to Seattle for a couple of weeks, to show Julia that she still had a father more or less in working order. The vile forecast put paid to that.

I found a snug hideaway in Potts Lagoon, a silent, forest-girdled pool, where a beachcomber named John Walders lived with his wife in a gingerbread float-house. With their buoyant household, their dog, their books, their collection of Indian artifacts salvaged from the edges of the sea, the Walderses had built a life of enviable self-sufficiency. Their fuel came from the forest, their water from the roof, funnelled into a great galvanized tank by the front door, their electricity from a generator housed in a shed on the raft. They lived handsomely on fish, game, and whatever they could grow in the orchard and garden they shared with a family of bears.



They agreed to look after my boat for a couple of weeks. Then they used the archipelagian bush telegraph to get me airlifted out to Port Hardy, on Vancouver Island. Twenty-four hours later, I stepped out of another plane, the jet shuttle from Vancouver to Seattle. My small family was waiting for me at the gate, and Julia leaped into my arms. She clung fiercely to me, silent, her face buried in my shoulder, inhaling me in long deep draughts. From the alien potpourri of smells—diesel fuel, sweat, the airline miniature of Johnnie Walker—she was busy extracting a vital essence-of-father.

Next morning, I called my parents in England. My father came to the phone.

"Peter—hi! I'm back in Seattle for a couple of weeks. How are things?"

"Fair winds?" he said. The connection wasn't as good as usual; his voice was faint.

Full of my trip, I told him of my defeat by the cyclone and the berth I'd found in Potts Lagoon; I rattled airily on about crags, precipices, cascades, whirlpools. I was trying to whet his appetite for spectacles of nature and my parents' own American adventure: they'd be setting off as soon as I returned from Juneau. My idea was that once they reached Minneapolis they should drive to Seattle along the minor highways of the West, taking the better part of two weeks. No interstates, I said; choose dirt roads over blacktops. Use the De Lorme state atlases, with their large scale and full contours. They'd put up for the night in one- or no-stoplight towns. I promised them that they would discover an America rarely seen by Americans. They'd cross the Plains, the Rockies, the Cascades. My plan was that they'd lose their ingrained British notions of "the Yanks" and see something of the grand, complicated, and hospitable country that had made an immigrant of me. I saw them arriving in Seattle astonished at the country.

"You've got the state atlases now?"

"All in the study, old boy. And the what's it . . . the Rand McNally."

"Forget the Rand McNally. The roads that you'll be taking aren't marked in Rand McNally."

"One thing, old boy?"

"Yes?"

"Just a slight question mark's cropped up. Lately, I've been having a spot of tummy trouble. You know." He made the noise—sniff, snort, chuckle—with which he usually greeted such nonsense as the latest ruling from the Church of England Synod or daft goings on in the town-planning department of Market Harborough.

Eighteen months before, he'd been through surgery and chemotherapy. "Nipped it in the bud," he'd said cheerfully, and never mentioned cancer again.

Now he said: "Tests . . ." and "Looks as if we might have to put our American jaunt on hold for a bit, I'm afraid, old boy."

LONDON was airless and thinly overcast, the sun showing like a pockmarked orange from behind its perpetual veil of cloud. Like any foreign visitor, I had rented a car at Heathrow, and I set off for Market Harborough, stopping on the way at Fortnum & Mason to buy candied ginger for my father.

"It's good for him," my mother said over the phone. "He can keep it down, you see. I have to build his strength up. So we can go to Scotland." She had set her heart on one last holiday together.

I loaded the boot (not the trunk) with an armful of jars of ginger, then let myself back into the car on the passenger side, wondering where the steering wheel had gone—the beginning of a morning of jet-shocked strangeness.

There was a strange car in the driveway of my parents' bungalow on Coventry Road, and a strange face at the door when I pressed the bell.

"I'm the district nurse!" confided the face, in a whisper, as if she were a burglar. "You must be one of the sons." From behind the nurse, my mother appeared, looking uncertain of her standing in her own house. Beside the unshapely largeness of the nurse, my mother looked tiny, an elf woman, her eyes huge and exhausted.

"Jonathan! Are you all right? You're so thin. You're all skin and bones!"

I felt my mother's distress at finding that a gaunt man in his fifties was her son. I saw that, in this novel period of life, when time itself goes weird, she had been prepared to greet a hulking teen-ager, or an assistant lecturer in his pink twenties—not someone who was so promising a candidate for death in his own right.

"I'm used to having a pussycat doctor."

I hugged her. She was all skin and bones.

A gray metal wheelchair stood in the hall, a plaid rug folded on one of its arms. I couldn't take my eyes off this alien contraption; its utility-issue ugliness, like the nurse's dowdy uniform, seemed somehow needless and cruel. I looked in on my father, but he was asleep. Jaundice had turned the skin of his face to the color of an ancient legal deed. Every bone protruded from behind the skin. But his beard was in fine fettle, sprouting in silver tufts and curls and tassels, as if it had every intention of enjoying life long into the future.

I joined my mother in the kitchen.

"Do you take sugar, dear? I don't remember."

"No sugar for me."

"I think it's William who does. Or is it Dominic? I don't think it's Colin."

"Whoever," I said. "Tell me what you can—what you know."

"Well," she said, her high voice rising in forced brightness, "I talked to the doctor this morning. We both like him, Peter and I, we both like the doctor very much. And I said to him, 'There will be a remission, won't there? If I can get him to eat properly—if he gets his appetite back? He will get up and about again, won't he? We might be able to go to Scotland?' "

Before her marriage, my mother had supported herself by writing romantic stories for women's magazines. Dialogue had been her forte.

"And the doctor said, 'Well, Monica, I don't think I ought to raise your hopes too high. I'm afraid I don't think you ought to count on that.' And I said to him, 'How long?' "

Her voice was an appalled whisper. "He said . . . he said, 'One never can tell, but, perhaps, a few . . . weeks.' " She gave a choking laugh, and in my mother's face I saw the abyss.

MARKET HARBOROUGH was a fox-hunting town: I passed a shop selling red coats and riding crops for the tally-ho crowd. Beyond the market square and the old grammar school lay a shopping mall of sorts. The architect had obviously once visited America, but hadn't quite got it right. In the Sainsbury's supermarket of this mid-Atlantic no-man's-land, I put together the ingredients for a chicken-and-coriander curry and bought a mixed case of wine. The

"To be frozen solid for a while on the north slope of Mt. Everest would, I occasionally feel, be a welcome change."

cool of the aisles—so bare by American standards—and the close reading of wine labels, the ritual of getting cash out of the A.T.M., all felt preciously ordinary, and I spun out my trip longer than was necessary.

"Hi," I said to the girl at the checkout. "How you doing?"

She gave me a look, and reminded me of my Martian status here.

When I got back to my parents' home, rain had begun to fall, big splashy globules dropping from a windless gray sky. I made an important fuss of chopping things on the kitchen table, pulling the cork out of a bottle of red Burgundy, ostentatiously sniffing it, then clinking glasses with my mother.

"I don't stop hoping. It's very wrong to stop hoping, don't you think? I just hope now that we can have this summer together.... But he must eat," she said with sudden fierceness.

With the curry bubbling on the stove, I went into the bedroom to talk to my father. He was awake, but dozy with morphine.

"Thanks for the ginger, old boy."

I sat in the chair by the bed in the darkening room, and told him about Julia—her ebullient sociability, her growing verbal dexterity, her happiness at preschool. "Light of my life," I said.

He nodded, smiled, and went to sleep.

My mother and I ate in the small dining room that opened onto a glassed-in porch overlooking the back garden. The bungalow was a modest brick affair, built in the nineteen-forties, that my parents had moved into a couple of years before. Its one stab at grandeur was the lawn, which could have held a tennis court with ample room left over. In the last year, my father had been planting it with saplings, to break up the monotony of mown grass. In the half-dark, I could see their spring leaves hanging limp. To plant young trees, I thought, is tempting fate, an activity that ought to be reserved for children.

I left to drive back to London that evening. Traffic was thin at this time of night. I was dazzled by my own lights on the wet black surface of the carriageway. Heavy lorries sped south, big as cargo ships. To right and left, the darkness crowded in—a thick fir forest. By Newport Pagnell, where I stopped for petrol, I was seeing boils and whirlpools in the road. To rid myself of these marine hallucinations, I turned up the radio and got the news on Radio 4, followed by the shipping forecast.

"Dogger, Fisher, German Bight... Humber, Thames, Dover... Wight, Portland, Plymouth..." There were gale warnings for Fastnet and the Irish Sea. Southwest 7, rising to gale 8 later.

I was back among the whirlpools, passage-making through the forest.

Death is a wilderness in which everyone is lost for words.

I BORROWED a pile of books from a friend to keep me occupied—Evelyn Waugh's "Work Suspended," Richard Holmes's "Shelley: The Pursuit," and a small-print Victorian copy of Shelley's poems—and found a pleasant, airy room in a pub three miles from my parents' home. Seated by the open window, with bees foraging in the flowers outside, waiting for the telephone to ring, I tried my best to stay in touch with the voyage I had left behind at Potts Lagoon. It was hard to read, and hard to think. The word "metastasis" was much on my mind. Rapid transition from one point to another. The bees metastasized from flower to flower. I metastasized from Waugh to Shelley. The cancer, running wild inside my father, brought with it a new vocabulary for unruliness and disorder.

My brothers and I drew up a roster so as to visit in rotation, without intruding on the time that our mother needed to spend alone with our father or leaving them alone so long that she might feel abandoned. A fine line to tread, it was the subject of prickly dispute among us.

Day by day, as my father weakened, he fell back more and more on the conversational protocol that had served him well as a parish priest. "Good to see you," he'd say. "Nice of you to drop in." He was dealing with his own death patiently, tolerantly; a trained professional dealing with bad news.

One morning I took his hand in mine. He looked surprised—and even, possibly, a little frightened. Things were not usually thus between us. I let the hand drop, but said, "You're setting us all a hell of an example to follow... handling this with so much bravery. We're all very proud of you."

A sudden, lively argumentative gleam came into my father's eyes. "Oh, I don't know about bravery," he said. He was back in his come-off-it-old-boy voice—the one he'd used to debunk my university-fed ideas in the days I'd fancied myself a Marxist literary theoretician. "I don't know about bravery. I'd say it was more of a question of what kind of act you put on. Wouldn't you, old boy? Presentation of self and all that?"

"Well, if it's an act," I said, "it's a wonderfully brave act."

"It . . . doesn't . . . take . . . bravery," my father said, laying out the words between us, one by one. Then he made a mild, self-deprecating, harrumphing sound; a very English laugh.

At the vicarage, the bell would ring in the middle of lunch. "Oh, drat! Another parishioner!" my mother would say. But my father would go to the door, assembling his vicar's face as he went. "Oh, hello there! Not at all! Do come in!" and he would escort the visitor into the drawing room. Just before closing the door, he'd turn and make a face at my mother. His range of faces was as wide as a ship's wardrobe of signal flags, from the face that said "I'll be rid of this pest in a couple of minutes" to the one that said "Cancel all my afternoon engagements and bring us tea and sandwiches in half an hour." From behind the closed door came the sounds of distraught sobbing, fantastical narratives of hard luck, expostulations of aggrieved innocence, insane cackles, and, sometimes, screams. These were punctuated by my father's voice, as regular and predictable as a metronome. "Uh-huh. Yup . . . yup . . . yup. I see . . . Uh-huh . . . 've got you . . . Hmm . . ."

Sitting at his bedside, I was the parishioner now. He was trying to offer all his visitors the solace in the presence of death which it had been his job to dispense as a parson. He must have conducted, on average, three or four funerals a week during his working life. He knew the rigmarole. In the face of his own death, he sought to project an air of calming professional reassurance. He struggled to be jokey, upbeat, nothing to it, and carry on as usual. Sometimes I saw the fear in his eyes, but it would be gone in a flash; he was boxing it away from public view, as a good priest must.

My mother told me that the morphine was giving him bad dreams.

I READ Shelley, and for good reason. Shelley, born on August 4, 1792, when Vancouver was becalmed in Queen Charlotte Strait, some fifteen miles from Potts Lagoon, was mad about boats. He

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ADVENTURE

MISADVENTURE

I HAVE spent a good part of my life living in remote places, and almost always they have served up adventures in the form of small happenings that suddenly raise enormous questions, happenings that still rumble in my mind.

One of the most vivid of these occurred in the Dominican Republic, where I spent a string of shoeless winters in its most remote province, beyond the reach of mail, telephone, electricity, newspapers, and running water. My neighbors lived mostly by fishing and subsistence farming, and over the years we grew to know them well. The men from a nearby settlement had helped build our small house above the beach, and they would often wander up of an evening to sit on the stone terrace and talk, always bringing some offering—an egg, a hand of bananas, some coffee beans in a leaf. Few of them could read or write, but they were no less than eloquent in conversation, and inexhaustibly curious. They would ask endless questions about life in the United States, for many of them had a relative who had made the hazardous journey there; and we in turn learned their ways. Nothing delighted them so much as making small deals, a kind of barter that we all lived by, sharing harvests and catches by way of the children, a band of small, swift messengers.

Two neighbors in particular, Pucho and Porfirio, both fishermen, often helped me on the land when the sea allowed, and with them I made a deal, to bring them fishing gear from the *gran mundo*, as they always called it, in exchange for an eatable share of their catch, an arrangement that served all of us well over the years. One morning, I had returned from my weekly visit to the nearby town to get some supplies and to pick up a batch of mail, and was sitting on the terrace slitting open envelopes from what seemed increasingly another world, when Pucho and Porfirio appeared on the path, bearing fish, among them two squat *cofre*, or boxfish, to which we always looked forward. They perched on the edge of the terrace, and we exchanged news.

Among the mail spread on the warm stone of the terrace were two or three mail-order catalogues. Porfirio began to leaf through one of them, stopping here and there to point to an illustration. "Alejandro, what is that?" I tried to wave off his questions; I sensed trouble ahead.

Sure enough, he eventually reached a double-page spread advertising a rowing machine. "Alejandro, what is that?" I could no longer put him off. "*Es una máquina de remar*"—a rowing machine—I told him. Pucho grabbed the catalogue, and the effect on both of them was electric. They crowed with delight. "And how much does this wondrous machine cost?" Porfirio now had the scent. I made a rapid calculation: "Almost four thousand pesos." They whistled, but their eyes were already gleaming.

"Do you know?" Porfirio stood up suddenly, and pointed far out, to where the waves broke. "To get to the reef out there where we fish, Pucho and I, we row for almost an hour. And back, when we're tired. And when we fish nights across the bay, that is a two-hour row for us, and the same back! But with this magnificent machine—"

"Porfirio!" I stopped him with a hand. "Take a good look at the picture. People keep these machines in their houses." Both pairs of eyes looked at me in disbelief. "You mean, there is no boat?" Pucho said. I shook my head. "And no water at all?" He could hardly contain himself. "So people in the *gran mundo* have this expensive machine at home to make themselves do the thing we most hate doing in our miserable lives?" I could do nothing but confirm their horror.

Porfirio waved the catalogue indignantly. "Alejandro, forgive me, but this world in here seems crazy to me. Why would sensible people, who can afford to buy fish, want this torture instrument in their houses? It is far beyond my understanding."

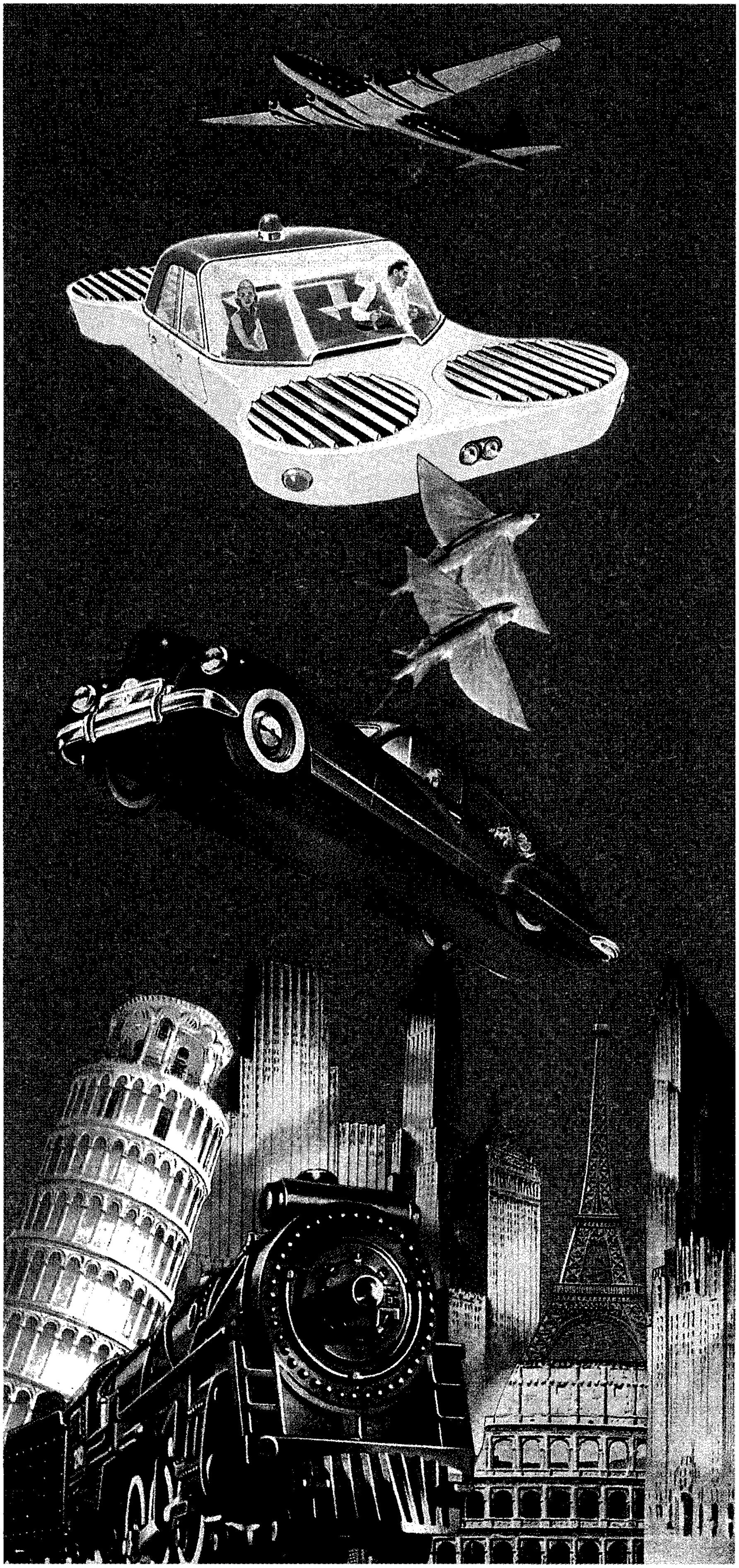
There was little I could say, for I felt much as they did. Feebly, I tried to explain. "People there sit at desks for too long, so they have these machines at home for exercise."

They frowned in unison. "Exercise?" Pucho had trouble with the word. "And what is exercise?"

I gave up. From then on, I got rid of the catalogues whenever they appeared. In that place, they had come to seem increasingly subversive. I discovered later, however, that it was as well Porfirio had stopped at the pages with the rowing machine. Three pages further on, a tanning machine had been lying in wait.

—ALASTAIR REID

WINSTON SMITH



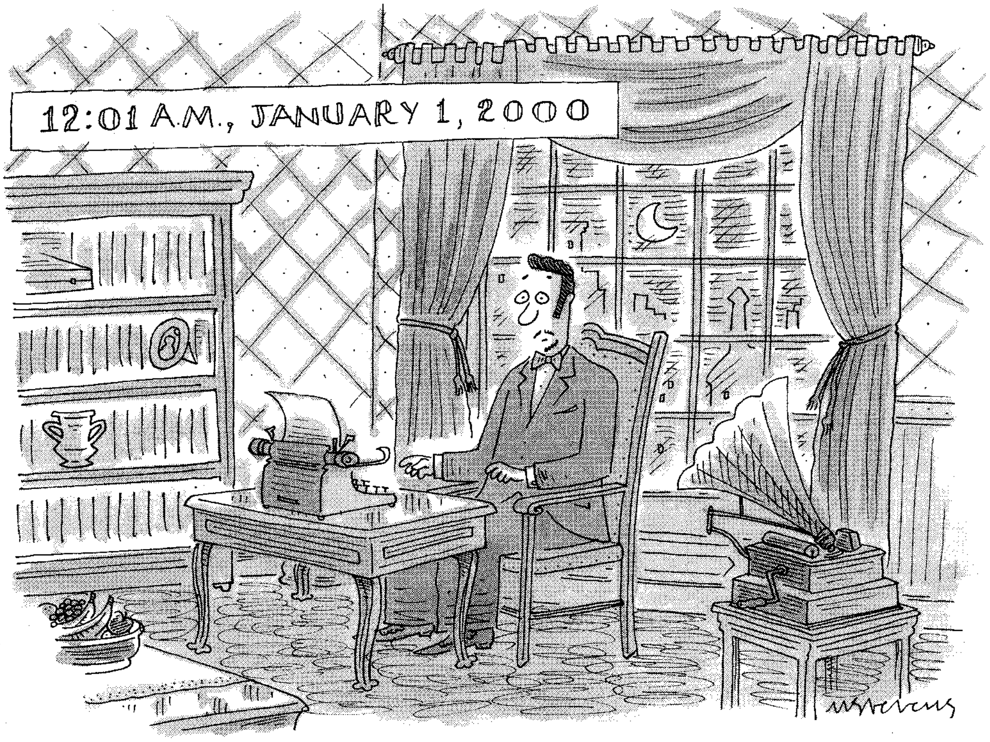
loved to write about water; and he died at the helm of his own wildly overcanvased miniature schooner, when it foundered in a sudden afternoon storm in the Gulf of Spezia. His description of the landscape—or waterscape, rather—of death itself sounds uncannily like the Pacific Northwest.

In December, 1815, six and a half years before his own death by water, Shelley finished "Alastor," in which the hero, named the Poet, "left his cold fireside and alienated home to seek strange truths in undiscovered lands"—the Romantic solitary wanderer. He journeys through Arabia, Persia, and Kashmir, until, lonely, lovelorn, and in the throes of a sublime despair, he reaches the ocean, where he finds a "little shallop floating near the shore." The boat is abandoned and unseaworthy, but its deplorable condition is an added attraction for the Poet, because "a restless impulse urged him to embark and meet lone Death on the drear ocean's waste." In the journey that follows, Shelley describes icy summits, whirlpools, crags with black and jagged arms, a shattered mountain, along with "battling tides," a "grey precipice," and "barren pinnacles." Building a suitable landscape for his hero to die in, Shelley created a near-perfect replica of British Columbia.

The voyages of Cook, La Pérouse, Vancouver, and the fur-trade captains had brought the wilderness of the Pacific Northwest into the libraries of Shelley's generation. By the the eighteen-tens, when the Alps and the Lake District were beginning to swarm with hikers, there was a hunger for some landscape more unvisited, wild, and sublime than Europe could supply. Extreme experience—the peaks and chasms of love and death, which were at the heart of the Romantic movement—required a corresponding extremity in nature.

I read eagerly about Shelley's death at sea, gate-crashing the London Library (my membership long lapsed) to fill in details absent from Richard Holmes's splendid life of the poet.

Amateur sailing, like mountaineering, was itself a product of the Romantic revolution—the sea and the mountains being the last true wildernesses—and poets in search of wild nature inevitably gravitated to boats. When Shelley moved his large and unconventional family to Lerici, on the Gulf of Spezia, in the spring of 1822, he spent eighty pounds on a scaled-down model of an



American-style schooner: sleek, fast, and only twenty-four feet long. Shelley wanted to name the boat the Ariel, but, at Byron's lordly and egotistical insistence, it came to be called the Don Juan.

The boat was fast from the start, but Shelley, wanting even greater speed, added topmasts, staysails, and a false stern. To balance the enormous square-footage of canvas that the Don Juan now carried, he had to line the bilges with twenty-nine pigs of cast-iron ballast. William St. Clair, in his biography of Trelawny, who had a major hand in Don Juan's design and building, describes it as "one of the most unseaworthy vessels ever constructed."

On July 1st, Shelley sailed for Leghorn, thirty-eight nautical miles south of Lerici, with a friend, Edward Williams, and a sixteen-year-old "boat boy," Charles Vivian. It took him seven hours. Leaving Williams and Vivian to take care of the boat, Shelley went to stay at Byron's palazzo, in Pisa, roistering with his literary friends and making plans for a new magazine. He returned to Leghorn six days later. There was a fair south wind, and the next afternoon Shelley, Williams, and Vivian put to sea. They were twenty miles north of Leghorn, and ten miles offshore, when, about six o'clock, storm clouds appeared and all the local fishing boats made for harbor. The storm broke at six-thirty. The sea off that coast is shallow; the waves inevitably steep. The Irish poetaster Count John Taaffe is the source for what happened next. Taaffe talked to the captain of an Italian fishing boat that had passed the Don Juan and offered help.

> Seeing that they could not long contend with such tremendous waves, he bore down upon them and offered to take them on board. A shrill voice, which is supposed to have been Shelley's, was distinctly heard to say "No." The waves were running mountains high—a tremendous surf dashed over the boat, which to his astonishment was still crowded with sail. "If you will not come on board for God's sake reef your sails or you are lost," a sailor cried through the speaking trumpet. One of the gentlemen [Williams, it is believed] was seen to make an effort to lower the sails—his companion seized him by the arm as if in anger.

The Don Juan foundered ten miles west of Viareggio. Days later, the bodies of Shelley, Williams, and Vivian were washed ashore. The fish had eaten their faces away. Shelley was identified by his reefer jacket, white nankeen trousers, and black leather boots. A copy of Keats' "Poems" was in his jacket pocket.

On June 14th, I was reading in my room when, just before eleven o'clock at night, the telephone rang. It was my brother Dominic, asking if I could lend a hand: my father's sheet needed to be changed, a three-person job.

At the bungalow, both my mother and my brother looked like haggard sleepwalkers, their faces chalky with exhaustion and anxiety. We muttered at one another and trudged, single file, into the bedroom where my father lay. He was close to coma now. My mother lifted the bedclothes, and he was wearing only a diaper. The loincloth, the beard, the wasted body: he had become a deposition scene.

Ravaged though he was, he was astonishingly hard to shift. We tried to tug the soiled sheet from underneath him; it wouldn't budge. My brother and I held on to a leg apiece and hauled him sidewise across the bed while my mother cradled his head in her lap, saying, "It's all right, darling, it's all right! We're just giving you a clean sheet—" To me it seemed that, moving him limb by limb with such inexpert roughness, we were in danger of breaking him apart. My brother and I were a pair of amateur removal men, gasping for breath as we lugged my father about. Just as our job was almost done, my father rolled suddenly, face forward, and said, "I'm going!"

"No, you're not, my darling! You are not!"

I had never before heard my mother speak with such fierce authority.

Five minutes later, as I was leaving the bungalow to go back to my pub, my brother came with me to the door. "That was terrible," he said in a dry, creaky whisper.

"We did O.K.," I said.

In bed in my room, I tried to resume reading, but the words skedaddled all over the page like a flock of impish bats. The book fell out of my hand. Seconds later, I was roused by the imperious British double-jangle of the phone. The red numbers on the clock radio said 7:01 A.M.

My mother's voice. "Peter's—gone."

Of course he'd known. He always had been a realist—and never more so than in his last spoken words. No more indignities now. I was glad for him. Driving to Harborough in the rising sunshine, I wound the windows down and heard the blackbirds singing.

In the bedroom at the bungalow, he looked strangely less dead than when he'd been alive—his face relaxed in sleep so deep that I might almost have envied it, as I envied Julia's total surrender to unconsciousness. My mother sat beside him. For her sake, I bent down and brushed his cheek with my lips. It was less than a kiss. We'd never kissed. The cheek was only a little cooler than it should have been.

My mother said, in a small voice, "We've been so happy together. I love him so much."

My father, in full control of the morning, was in an amiable, even facetious, mood. He had left behind a closely typed ten-page document, headed "In the Event of a Death." He'd thought of everything, and clearly had enjoyed himself at the typewriter as he disposed of his own forthcoming remains:

> The immediate information required by the funeral director from the Will is the manner of disposal of the body . . . burial or cremation. We both wish to be cremated,—simple, no grave to keep up and visit and a decent way of disposal . . . NO Ilkley Moor processes for us! Disposal of ashes: uncertain but NOT for keeping on a mantelpiece! Scatter—tho' frowned on by church authorities—on e.g. British Camp, Malvern Hills or somewhere in Worcs . . . Oddingley [his father's parish] in or near the churchyard . . . or in the New Forest? . . . or?? (Have a week-end of it, expenses paid for hotel rooms etc.) More formally, St. Nicholas' churchyard has a garden. See the Vicar, of course.

"Funerals do not come cheaply!" he warned, advising us to instruct the undertaker that "simplicity is the order of the day."

With my father affably chatting away in my ear, I uncorked a bottle of cognac and brought it out on a tray, with glasses, to the lawn, where the family was now building to full strength. The oddity of drinking brandy at nine in the morning seemed proper, and might easily have been specified by my father. My brothers and I, all pale and pouchy-eyed, clinked glasses, and so Mr. Stamp, the undertaker, arrived at a scene of genteel debauchery, like the hungover remnants of a party from the night before.

He said, sotto voce, "My men are outside. For whenever you're ready."

He declined a glass of brandy, though I sensed a pang of regret. "A bit on the early side for me," he said, excusing himself to go and "have a quick word" with his men.

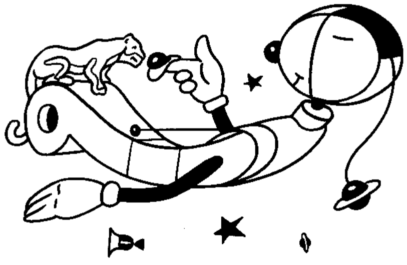
In the gloom of the house, behind my mother's cast-down head, I saw Mr. Stamp's men, half a dozen of them, going silently about their morning's work. Six black cormorants, shuffling through the hall. I didn't want to see exactly what it was they were doing.

SHELLEY'S body, sprinkled with quicklime and hastily buried in the sand, had turned indigo when Trelawny dug it up a month later in order to cremate it in a formal ceremony on the beach near Viareggio. Driftwood logs were burning in an iron furnace, specially constructed to Trelawny's specifications; and when "the fire was well kindled" Shelley's corpse, disfigured and partially decomposed, was heaped into it. Byron stood by, with his boat, the Bolivar, anchored just offshore. Leigh Hunt sat in his carriage while Trelawny, a couple of local fishermen, and some members of the Tuscan militia got on with the business of the cremation.

In Trelawny's account, Byron couldn't face the scene; he withdrew to the beach and swam off to the Bolivar. Leigh Hunt remained in the carriage. "The fire was so fierce," Trelawny wrote, "as to produce a white heat on the iron, and to reduce its contents to grey ashes. The only portions that were not consumed were some fragments of bones, the jaw, and the skull, but what surprised us all was that the heart remained entire. In snatching this relic from the fiery furnace, my hand was severely burned." Trelawny handed the heart to Hunt, who later presented it to Mary Shelley.

Shelley's young death by drowning, and his beach funeral, insured his apotheosis as a Romantic hero. I could not now hear the word "cremation" without thinking of the scene at Viareggio.

THAT afternoon, having moved on from cognac to hock, my brother Colin and I sat on the little rockery at the far end of the lawn, mingling the scent of flowering lavender with the smoke of Marlboros. Colin—sensitive to giving my mother further, wanton reminders of cancer—was carefully hiding his butts deep in the crevices between the stones. I was grinding mine into the gravel path with my heel.



Colin had always looked the most like my father. There were streaks of silver now in his neatly trimmed black beard. We talked about the ritual of changing my father's sheets.

"The weird thing was," he said, "that even though his body was so wasted, I saw it was my body—you know? My arms, my legs, my torso . . ."

I realized that I'd felt that, too, but mine was a shadowy, inarticulate sensation. "I'm worried about our carrying the coffin," I said.

During the morning, perhaps elevated by brandy, we had agreed that the four brothers should carry the coffin from the hearse into the crematorium, after the funeral service. Mr. Stamp had nixed our plan to carry the coffin into the church; that was a job for pros. "There are steps at St. Nicholas's," he said darkly, "and a bit of a tricky turn to make as you go in."

"When you see them doing it on television," I said, "it's always six hulking marines, and they're always marching in step. If you fall out of step, what do you think happens to the coffin?"

"Oh, God."

"Do you think William and Dominic know how to march in step?"

"Perhaps we could arrange for a practice—"

"With an empty coffin? Left, left, left, right, left?"

"Have you got another cigarette?" I reached for my wallet and fished out a snapshot of Potts Lagoon, taken from the floatplane six weeks before. As if I were telling a bedtime story to Julia, I described to my brother the world inside the picture: the bears in the woods, the still pool, the neighbors paying visits in their boats, the irrelevance of the telephone, the fish and game, the lilting house on its raft. I pointed out my own boat, tied to the Walderses' cabin with a cat's-cradle of ropes. As a graduate student, Colin had read the standard texts on the Kwakiutl. I rattled on about how their art was a brilliant, stylized exploration of flux and chaos.

Colin sucked on his Marlboro. "I wish I had a Potts Lagoon."

Fifteen days later, I was back at the lagoon, picking up the severed thread of my own journey. ♦

OUR FAR-FLUNG CORRESPONDENTS

ADVENTURE AS EXECUTIVE THERAPY

The luxury of roughing it.

BY MARK SINGER

UNDER the circumstances, I naturally expected some bears. But the cougars—a clever touch, I thought—took me by surprise. Did having to deal with both about an hour into my four-day adventure journey to British Columbia last month make the diversions that followed seem anticlimactic? Hardly. I spent a good part of the trip in a hyperstimulated frame of mind—a condition that any alert clinician would readily diagnose as sensory-overload syndrome. Which is to say that the bears and the cougars were only a small element of a much bigger picture. The knowledge that they weren't simulated or virtual or merely hypothetical bears and cougars but were genuine foul-breathed, down-in-the-dirt, happy-to-munch-human-flesh wild beasts reassured me, up front, that I wouldn't be heading home whining that I'd got less than my money's worth.

I feel it's not inappropriate to mention the money, because, frankly, there was quite a pile of it on the table. Here's what happened:

I'd decided I wanted to tag along on a corporate-adventure junket. Specifically, I was eager to insinuate myself into a party of perhaps overcompensated American executives who had signed on for an adrenaline-fuelled escapade of some sort, propelled by the assumption that a generous expenditure earmarked for a concentrated dose of team-oriented risk-and-reward calculation and personal bonding in the context of a deep-wilderness setting could be justified for its long-term benefit to the firm's bottom line. In other words, a pricey working vacation that, as long as no one died or got maimed, would eventually pay for itself. Anyway, that was the idea.

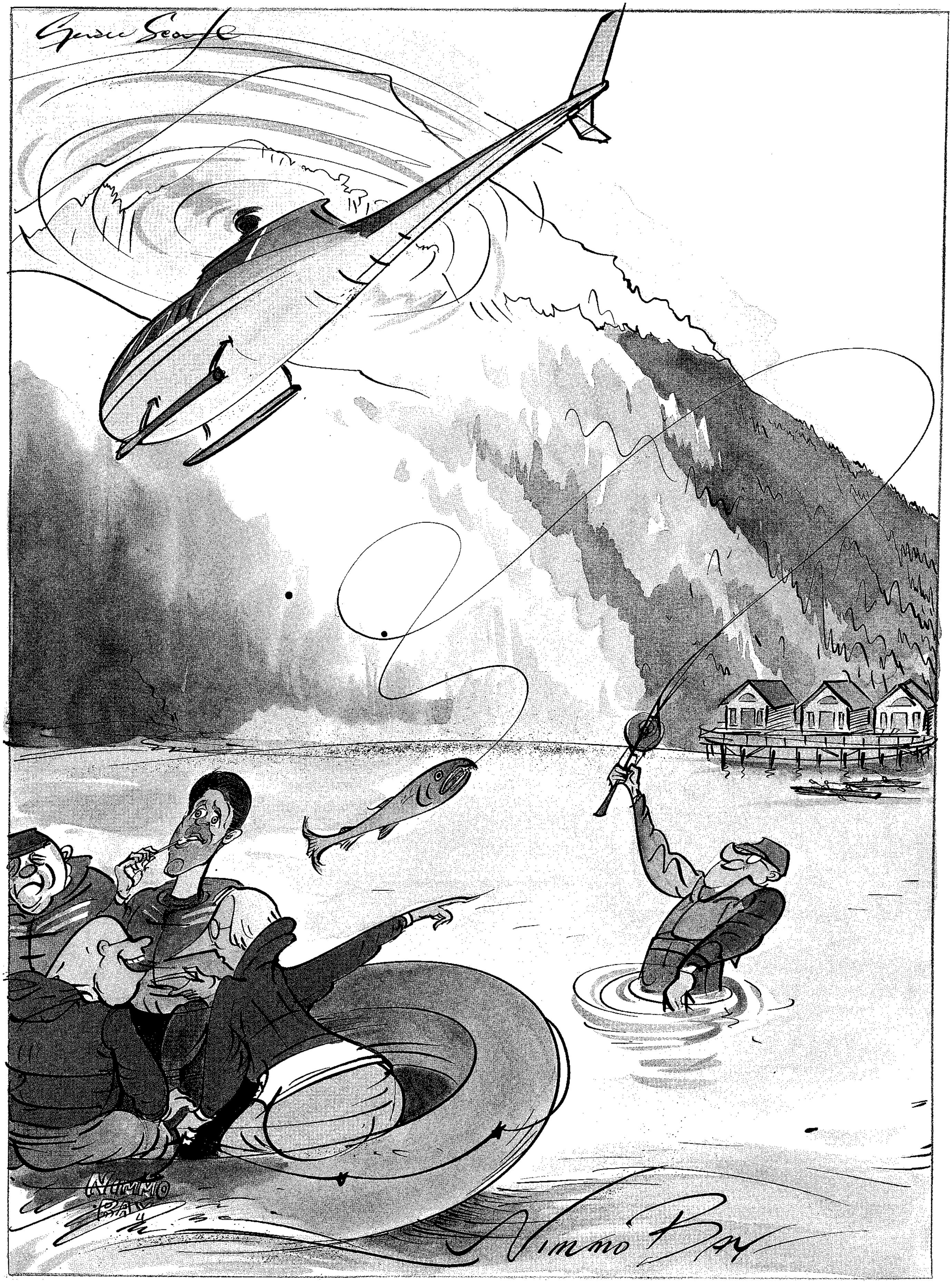
I made a bunch of phone calls and cruised a bunch of Web sites and found some helpful people—among them representatives of Project Adventure, a not-for-profit enterprise that conducts "experiential learning" workshops for corporations and schools, and the AlfresCo Alliance, a consortium of consultants which, among other things, arranges outdoor-adventure tours for corporate clients. These contacts steered me, in turn, to what seemed an ideal destination—Nimmo Bay Resort, a fly-in outpost two hundred miles north of Vancouver.

NIMMO BAY'S owners, Craig and Deborah Murray, set up shop eighteen years ago as a saltwater fishing camp. Previously, they'd been living in Port McNeill, on Vancouver Island, with their two young sons. (A daughter would come along later.) Deborah had a job at a logging site. Craig, who had also worked as a logger, and a boat builder and a manager of an ice arena as well, happened to have a degree in hotel management. But they wanted to be their own bosses—nothing grandiose, just a family business, and why not one that dovetailed with Craig's lifelong interest in fishing? First, they hunted for a waterfall, which they would need as a source of hydropower and drinking water. They found it within a ninety-minute boat ride of Port McNeill, tucked away in Nimmo Bay—an appendix to one of the broad-channelled tidal inlets that jigsaw the rain-forested central coast of mainland British Columbia. Next, they bought a floating dock, piled it with lumber, hitched it to a tugboat, towed it to the bay, and parked it a hundred and fifty yards from the waterfall, a torrent that originated a mile away, up the snowcapped slope of Mt. Stephens. They built a lodge themselves on top of the floating dock and opened for business in May, 1981, with accommodations for eight guests. Deborah took care of the kitchen and kept the books, and Craig was the chief fishing guide. To start up, Craig had begged a fifty-thousand-dollar bank loan, and then he and the banker watched in horror as interest rates climbed to the mid-twenties. According to Deborah, they were able to keep going "only because the bank didn't want to foreclose on a hydrodam in the middle of nowhere."

One day in 1983, after a couple of years spent escorting clients in fourteen-foot aluminum boats hunting salmon within a twenty-mile radius of Nimmo Bay, Craig was struck with a galvanizing vision: helicopter-fishing. The principle was ancient and fundamental—if the fish don't bite where you happen to be situated, then go where you think they might—but the hardware made a tremendous difference. With an assist from a helicopter, a nimble fly fisherman, or, for that matter, a sweaty-palmed neophyte, could be deposited on a gravel bar in an otherwise inaccessible river and, after a few casts, or maybe just one cast, have an epiphany with a two-fisted salmon that in one's lifetime catalogue of sublime memories would rank perhaps a notch below the birth of one's children.

Grandiosity might not be such a bad idea after all. British Columbia, Craig says derisively, is "the last bastion of the meat fisherman," declassé types who eat whatever they snag. At Nimmo Bay, he would enforce an inflexible catch-and-release policy—not only for the snob appeal, but for the sake of true sportsmanship. The fish, captured with barbless hooks, would always be set free. The season now extends from April, when Pacific steelheads are in the rivers, spawning, through October, when coho, chinook, chum, and pink salmon, after eating voraciously in the ocean, congregate in those same streams, programmed by nature to spawn and die. Come June and July, when salmon can't be found in freshwater, the Murrays have the means to airlift anglers into this or that anonymous river inhabited

GERALD SCARFE


NIMMO BAY
Nimmo Bay

"From the git-go, I was open to the enlivening possibilities of a savage animal attack."

by large numbers of cutthroat and rainbow trout. The rub is that a day (and a night) at Nimmo Bay starts at more than eleven hundred dollars, and—even with three three-star meals and brightly patterned bed linens and a champagne-stocked minibar and fancy soaps in the bathroom and jaw-dropping scenery thrown in—it doesn't make a lot of sense to try to sell four days of heli-fishing for trout. Fortunately, there were baby boomers out there who'd gone to Nepal in the sixties, lived on ten dollars a day, and in the meanwhile had made money faster than they could spend it. Craig figured he could help solve that problem by cooking up packages of "Super-Ventures" and "Heli-Ventures"—heli-hiking at seven thousand feet, heli-river-rafting, sea-kayaking, beachcombing, cave-exploring, whale-watching. Why not an entire corporate board of directors? Twelve guests, two A-Star helicopters, four days at Nimmo Bay—a steal at fifty-two thousand dollars that the shareholders would never miss. After surveying the recreational opportunities within the neighborhood, Craig came up with a marketing strategy that he refers to as "thirty thousand square miles of potential adventures." He also came up with a Nimmo Bay Resort slogan—"To Fly Is Human . . . To Hover, Divine"—which, though a bit purple, has a loftier ring than, say, "Lunkers Guaranteed."

"I want to find a smart New York lawyer who can make Nimmo Bay its own country," says Craig, who has hazel eyes, brushed-back light-brown hair, and the bonhomie and compact physique of a barroom arm-wrestler. Temporarily, though, he has to settle for being the commander-in-chief of his own air force—a mini-fleet of A-Star and Jet Ranger choppers manned by cool-guy pilots who, as they prepare to levitate and depart Nimmo Bay, are prone to make cheerful pronouncements like "Everybody buckled in? All right. There's nothing to hold us back now but common sense and gravity!"

DESPITE assiduous efforts by Project Adventure and the AlfresCo Alliance, none of their corporate clients came through with the four thousand five hundred bucks a head (plus taxes, tips, and airfare from wherever) to transplant eight or ten senior executives to Nimmo Bay for four days just so I could take a lot of helicopter rides and play cultural anthropologist. As a result, by the time I left New York for Vancouver, in mid-July, the agenda had changed. Craig Murray, who is never shy about taking matters into his own hands, had called a friend, Patrick Moore, an environmental activist turned forestry-industry consultant. Together, they mustered their own group of heli-adventure-seekers—nine British Columbians employed in either the forestry or the tourism industries.

Three and a half years ago, when most of the world's attention was inexplicably focussed elsewhere, the Council of Tourism Associations of British Columbia, the Council of Forest Industries, and the Forest Alliance of British Columbia signed a "Statement of Mutual Recognition and Respect," the central tenet of which was "that the activities of the forest industry and tourism industry should be managed in a manner that creates reciprocal benefits and enhances resource sustainability." Or, as Rodney King said so suc-

HILLARY'S
LISTENING TOUR OF APARTMENT 8-B
I have back pain.
My sister and her sleazy husband are coming next week and I wish they weren't
I want to live closer to the mall.
We should get paid for going to school.
Why can't I have a monkey?
R. Chast

WIN THIS CAR
drink fizzy cola!
BESTSELLERS 50% off!
FREE STUFF... FREE

"He hasn't slept well since his dreams started carrying advertising."

cinctly during the Los Angeles riots in 1992, "Can't we all just get *along*?" For unclear reasons, three and a half years later, good intentions notwithstanding, nothing tangible had been done to implement the goals of the so-called forestry-tourism accord. Coming together at Nimmo Bay, with a reporter in attendance, Craig Murray decided, would offer an opportunity to "get started putting some flesh on the bones of the accord."

So there we were, at cocktail hour, gathered on the foredeck of the main lodge for the official opening of "Forestry, Tourism, and *The New Yorker* at Nimmo Bay": Jane Panicucci, a Project Adventure manager who had come along as a "facilitator" for the group dialogue; Nancy Johnson, of AlfresCo, who had come along to spread good cheer; Tom Lundgren, Wayne Clogg, Sandy Lavigne, and Brenda Armstrong, all representing major logging companies; Deane Strongitharm, a tourism consultant; Nancy Greene Raine, a Canadian national hero (by virtue of her gold- and silver-medal slalom-racing performances at the 1968 Winter Olympic Games) and now the director of skiing and a ski-lodge owner at Sun Peaks Resort, in southern B.C.; Patrick Moore; Craig Murray; his aide-de-camp, Dominic Giossan; and me. For hors d'oeuvres, we'd been confronted with excessive quantities of cured salmon. In the kitchen, the chefs were preparing a typical Nimmo Bay welcome-aboard dinner: Indonesian prawns with baby greens, a mixed-berry sorbet palate cleanser, potato-crusted halibut with tropical-fruit salsa and lemon *beurre blanc*, and frozen white-chocolate cheesecake. First, however, Jane Panicucci, the facilitator, had some business to transact.

"I'm not really the facilitator of this event," Jane modestly proposed. "Nature is. I've got a really great chief facilitator with me." Lean, athletic, mid-thirties, Jane projected a balanced blend of social ease and professional tact. Wisely, she promised "no flip charts, no overheads, no theory," and then asked us to introduce ourselves formally and to explain why we'd chosen to attend. No one framed a more concise and statesmanlike reply than Tom Lundgren, the manager of forestry for Interfor, a hundred-and-thirty-five-million-dollar company that does most of its logging on the B.C. coast. "I'm here to see the forest through your eyes rather than mine," he said. Intuitively, I grasped that Tom was an independent thinker, who certainly wouldn't stoop to utter a perfect sound bite just because I happened to be taking notes. What if I had somehow failed to show up? Would representatives of the two mainstay industries of a great Canadian province forge ahead in a renewed commitment to the harmonious pursuit of self-interest? I was ruminating along those megalomaniacal lines when the ostensibly small matter arose of liability waivers that both Project Adventure and Nimmo Bay Resort wanted each of us to sign.

The Project Adventure document, which included a medical-history questionnaire and invoked "challenge by choice"—the principle that a free-willed adult who doesn't feel like rappelling down a cliff face just has to say so—seemed unexceptionable. By contrast, the Nimmo Bay waiver sounded like the handiwork of lawyers from the firm Boone, Crockett & Corleone. After some throat-clearing, the gloves came off: "I acknowledge that the activities which will be undertaken at the resort contain risks, dangers and hazards together with the risks of encountering wildlife, including but not limited to bears and cougars. I agree to assume all risks . . . and agree to pay the costs of any emergency evacuation of my person and belongings that may become necessary . . . I may suffer an accident or illness in a remote place . . . I hereby fully assume the consequences of any harm, injury or loss of life to my person. . . . "

As I interpreted this language, these were *provisional* bears and cougars, who didn't have to make a full-frontal appearance to be effective. Maybe they'd pounce, maybe they wouldn't pounce, but they were most definitely out there, squatting in the woods, reviewing their options. And what options, I wondered, might a human being exercise? Earlier that day, Craig had shared with me the distillation of his personal philosophy: "If you can't fish with somebody, don't do business with him." Well, what happened, I asked, if a Nimmo Bay guest refused to get with the program? "What do we do with a problem client?" he said. "Just wear the perma-grin"—which he then demonstrated. It was a flaccid bogus smile.

Anyone who declined to sign the waiver, presumably, would be allowed to show up for meals, admire the design and décor of the handsome guest quarters (or "intertidal chalets"), or hang out in the game room (where it was possible to shoot billiards, watch videos, and peruse the framed mementos of a 1996 Nimmo Bay Resort sojourn by George and Barbara Bush). Dressed in a courtesy white terry-cloth robe and bathing clogs, one could also visit the red-cedar deck erected at the base of the waterfall, where a deep pool of fresh snowmelt was accessible by steps, the bottom one of which could be gripped during the 1.7 seconds required to immerse completely, jump-start the heart, and cause average-size male genitals to shrink to grape-seed dimensions, after which a shin-banging dash back up the steps could terminate with a tingly plunge into a hot tub.

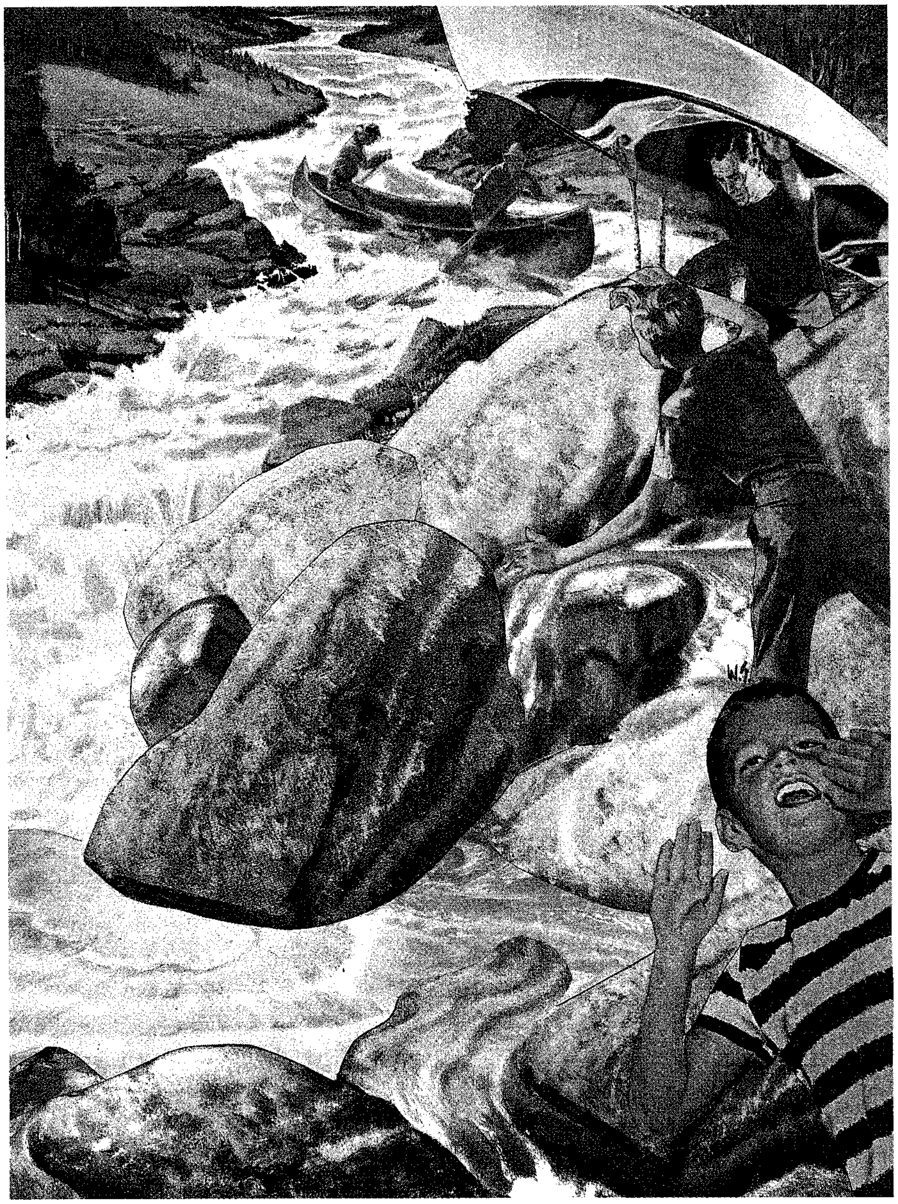
In the event, everybody signed. Meanwhile, a germ began incubating in my imagination. I became aware of it during dinner that first night, even before the potato-crusted halibut had been cleared, and I felt its presence often over the next few days as I listened politely to mealtime discourses meandering through intricate histories of natural-resource-policy mismanagement by the British Columbia provincial government. Occasionally, these discussions would take detours down paths thick with regional-planning anecdotage. I had just speared a forkful of frozen white-chocolate cheesecake when one of my tablemates began talking about "forest practices, parks, and wilderness protection, and multi-stakeholder consensus-based community-oriented negotiation processes," and I suddenly found myself longing for a literal cut-to-the-chase. By

ADVENTURE

UNDER WATER

When I was eighteen, I was a student on a month-long wilderness program in western Wyoming. On the third day, we went canoeing on the Green River, a tributary of the Colorado that begins in the glaciers of the Wind River Range and flows south across the sagebrush plains. Swollen by warm-weather runoff from an unusually deep snowpack, the Green was higher and swifter that month—June of 1972—than it had been in forty years. A river at flood stage can have strange currents. There is not enough room in the channel for the water to move downstream in an orderly way, so it collides with itself and forms whirlpools and boils and souse holes. Our instructors decided to stick to their itinerary nevertheless, but they put in at a relatively easy section of the Green, one that the flood had merely upgraded, in the international system of whitewater classification, from Class I to Class II. There are six levels of difficulty, and Class II was not an unreasonable challenge for novice paddlers.

The Green River did not seem dangerous to me. It seemed magnificently unobstructed. Impediments to progress—the rocks and stranded trees that under normal conditions would protrude above the surface—were mostly submerged. The river carried



our aluminum canoe high and lightly, like a child on a broad pair of shoulders. We could rest our paddles on the gunwales and let the water do our work. The sun was bright and hot. Every few minutes, I dipped my bandanna in the river, draped it over my head, and let an ounce or two of melted glacier run down my neck.

I was in the bow of the third canoe. We rounded a bend and saw, fifty feet ahead, a standing wave in the wake of a large black boulder. The students in the lead canoe were backferrying, slipping crabwise across the current by angling their boat diagonally and stroking backward. Backferrying allows paddlers to hover midstream and carefully plan their course instead of surrendering to the water's pace. But if they lean upstream—a natural inclination, for few people choose to lean toward the difficulties that lie ahead—the current can overflow the lowered gunwale and flip the boat. And that is what happened to the lead canoe.

I wasn't worried when I saw it go over. Knowing that we might capsize in the fast water, our instructors had arranged to have our gear trucked to our next campsite. The packs were all safe. The water was little more than waist-deep, and the paddlers were both wearing life jackets. They would be fine. One was already scrambling onto the right-hand bank.

But where was the second paddler? Gary, a local boy from Rawlins, a year or two younger than I, seemed to be hung up on something. He was standing at a strange angle in the middle of the river, just downstream from the boulder. Gary was the only student on the course who had not brought sneakers, and one of his mountaineering boots had become wedged between two rocks. The other canoes would come around the bend in a moment, and the instructors would pluck him out.

But they didn't come. The second canoe pulled over to the bank and ours followed. Thirty seconds passed, maybe a minute. Then we saw the standing wave bend Gary's body forward at the waist, push his face underwater, stretch his arms in front of him, and slip his orange life jacket off his shoulders. The life jacket lingered for a moment at his wrists before it floated downstream, its long white straps twisting in the current. His shirtless torso was pale and undulating, and it changed shape as hills and valleys of water flowed over him, altering the curve of the liquid lens through which we watched him. I thought, He looks like the flayed skin of St. Bartholomew in the Sistine Chapel. As soon as I had the thought, I knew that it was dishonorable. To think about anything outside the moment, outside Gary, was a crime of inattention. I swallowed a small, sour piece of self-knowledge: I was the sort of person who, instead of weeping or shouting or praying during a crisis, thought about something from a textbook (H. W. Janson's "History of Art," page 360).

Once the flayed man had come, I could not stop the stream of images: Gary looked like a piece of seaweed, Gary looked like a waving handkerchief, Gary looked like a hula dancer. Each simile was a way to avoid thinking about what Gary *was*, a drowning boy. To remember these things is dishonorable, too, for I have long since forgotten Gary's last name and the color of his hair and the sound of his voice.

I do not remember a single word that anyone said. Somehow, we got into one of the canoes, all five of us, and tried to ferry the twenty feet or so to the middle of the river. The current was so strong, and we were so incompetent, that we never got close. Then we tried it on foot, linking arms to form a chain. The water was so cold that it stung. And it was noisy—not the roar and crash of whitewater but a groan, a terrible bass grumble, from the stones that were rolling and leaping down the riverbed. When we got close to Gary, we couldn't see him; all we could see was the reflection of the sky. A couple of times, groping blindly, one of us touched him, but he was as slippery as soap. Then our knees buckled and our elbows unlocked, and we rolled downstream, like the stones. The river's rocky load, moving invisibly beneath its smooth surface, pounded and scraped us. Eventually, the current heaved us, blue-lipped and panting, onto the bank. In that other world above the water, the only sounds were the buzzing of bees and flies. Our wet sneakers kicked up red dust. The air smelled of sage and rabbitbrush and sunbaked earth.

We tried again and again, back and forth between the worlds. Wet, dry, cold, hot, turbulent, still.

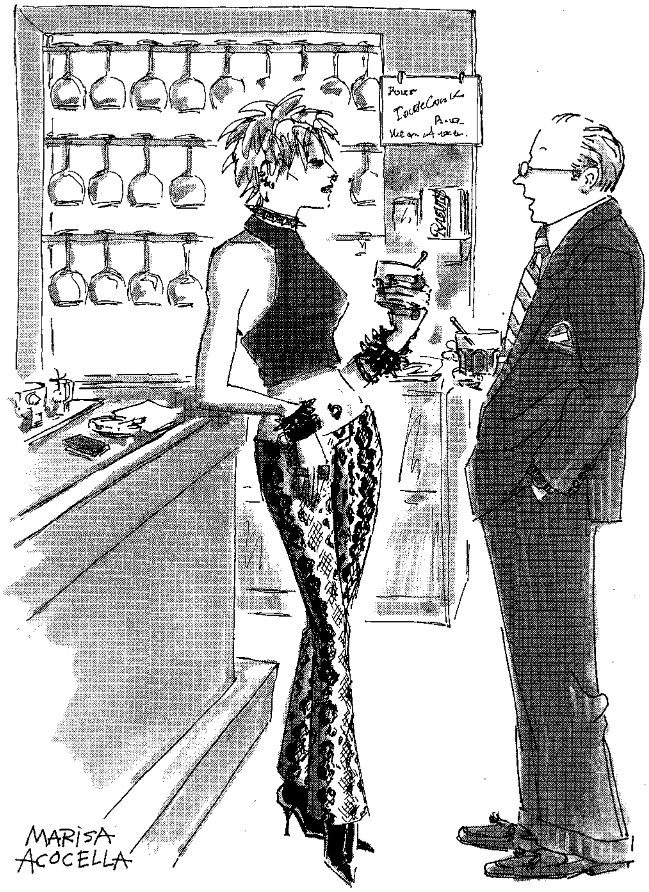
At first, I assumed that we would save him. He would lie on the bank and the sun would warm him while we administered mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. If we couldn't get him out, we would hold him upright in the river, and maybe he could still breathe. But the Green River was flowing at nearly three thousand cubic feet—about ninety tons—per second. At that rate, water can wrap a canoe around a boulder like tinfoil. Water can uproot a tree. Water can squeeze the air out of a boy's lungs, undo knots, drag off a life jacket, lever a boot so tightly into the riverbed that even if we had had ropes—the ropes that were in the packs that were in the trucks—we could never have budged him.

We kept going in, not because we had any hope of rescuing Gary after the first ten minutes but because we had to save face. It would have been humiliating if the instructors came around the bend and found us sitting in the sagebrush, a docile row of five with no hypothermia and no skinned knees. Eventually, they did come. The boats had been delayed because one had nearly capsized, and the instructors had made the other students stop and practice backferrying until they learned not to lean upstream. Even though Gary had already drowned, the instructors did all the same things we had done, more competently but no more effectively, because they, too, would have been humiliated if they hadn't skinned *their* knees. Men in wetsuits, belayed with ropes, pried the body out the next morning.

When I was eighteen, I wanted to hurry through life as fast as I could. Twenty-seven years have passed, and my life now seems too fast. I find myself wanting to backferry, to hover midstream, suspended. I might then avoid many things: harsh words, foolish decisions, moments of inattention, regrets that wash over me, like water.

—Anne Fadiman

WINSTON SMITH



"C'mon, Sugar, take a walk on the mild side."

which I mean that, from the git-go, I was open to the enlivening possibilities of a savage animal attack.

THINGS get cozy inside a fully loaded A-Star helicopter. The controls are on the right, as they are in a British automobile. Two passengers sit front left, four squeeze in behind, and all of them share in the same conversation via high-performance Bose headsets equipped with microphones and silicon-cushioned earpieces. A preflight safety briefing at Nimmo Bay sticks to basics: When the aircraft is on the ground, never approach it from the rear. When boarding, never step on the emergency flotation devices. In the back country, if you emerge from the forest and discover a parked helicopter but no pilot, or if the pilot becomes severely disabled by illness or ferocious woodland creatures, flip the red emergency-locator transmitter switch on the instrument panel and eventually a rescue unit will arrive. Otherwise, relax. As Andrew Bradley, one of the pilots, reassured us, "So long as we're not screaming, everything's O.K."

On a sunlit Saturday morning, we headed west, away from the mainland, en route to explore a cave. The mountains of the northern part of Vancouver Island, our destination, loomed in the hazy foreground. Logging barges, fishing boats, sailboats, and Alaska-bound cruise ships glided in the sea below. From my fellow-travellers, the all-purpose editorial response was "Wow!," repeated like a mantra. Up front, Patrick Moore, who has a Ph.D. in ecology and an overly generous urge to share his inexhaustible inventory of facts (roughly twenty-five per cent of all known living species are beetles; the Indians used sphagnum moss as an absorbent in diapers; "meromictic" describes a condition in which a layer of freshwater floats above a layer of seawater), narrated reference points on the horizon. It was all new to me, and, since I hadn't a map in my lap, it was all just delectable poetry: Mackenzie Sound . . . Broughton Archipelago . . . Lizard Point . . . Cormorant Island . . . Beaver Cove . . . Nimpkish Lake . . . Bonanza Range.

Our pilot, Rob Fletcher, introduced us to a couple of patented Nimmo Bay Resort aeronautic maneuvers—the "island rush" and "river running." Fixing on an obstacle not far ahead—a steeply elevated landmass—he approached on a collision course, leapfrogged at the last moment, and induced a giddy surge of weightlessness. Then, over Vancouver Island, he spotted a stream, dropped to just above the tops of the trees that lined its banks, and cruised through every turn in its flow like a Formula One driver on a snaky Grand Prix course.

I noticed a railroad trestle at eye level about half a mile ahead. "Rob," I asked, "would you be planning to fly above that bridge or below it?"

"I'm not sure," he said. "What's your preference?"

Would that be apple-cranberry breakfast muffin in the back of my throat, I wondered, or were those the eggs Florentine?

"REMEMBER," warned Michael Henwood, a founder of the British Columbia Cave Guiding Association, as we prepared to enter the Black Hole. "Caving accidents are known to happen at the entrance, due to erosion and overeagerness."

"And," Dominic Giossan helpfully added, "overeating at lunch."

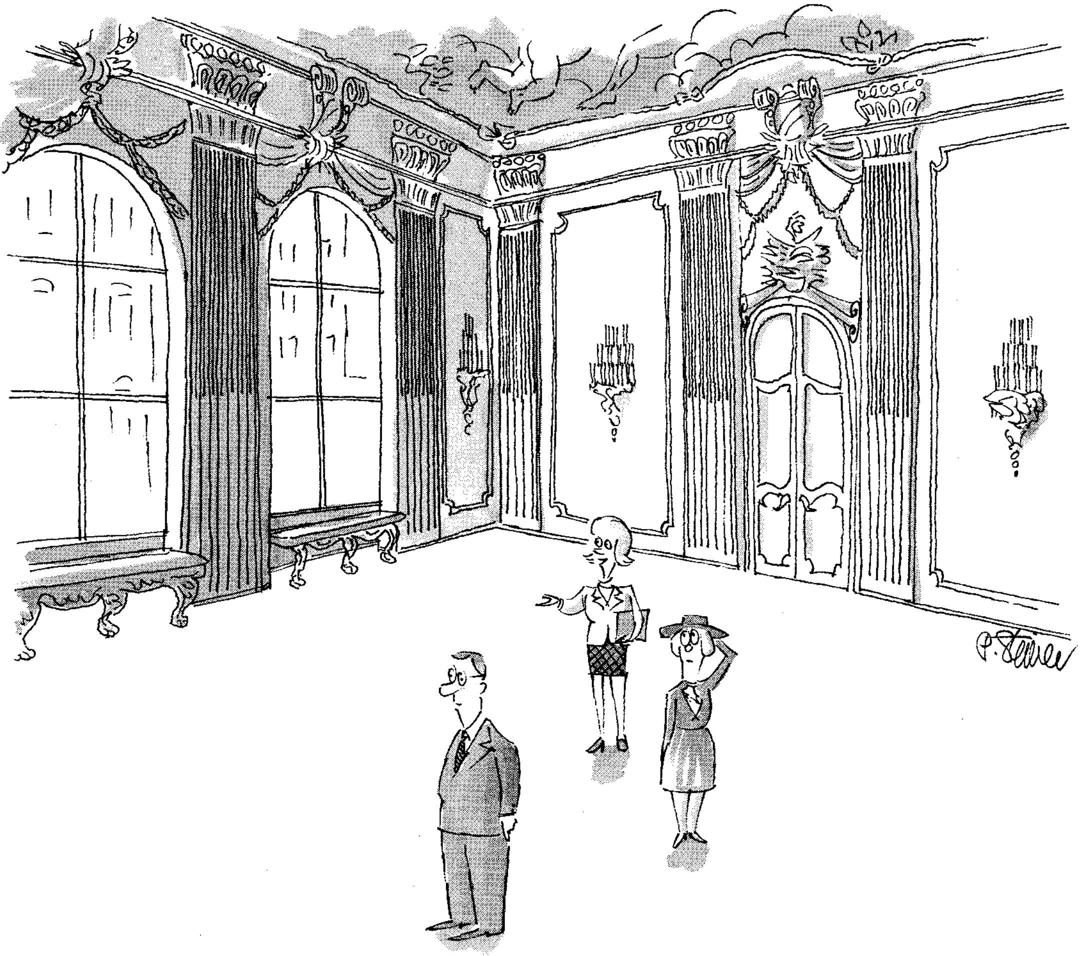
Dominic, Craig's affable second-in-command, was packing up the leftovers: Black Forest ham and vegetables wrapped in green tortillas, barbecued chicken wings, artichoke dip, Asiago bread sticks, cheese, crackers, fruit, brownies, and sour-cherry pastries. The bottles of Pinot Noir bearing Craig Murray's picture on the label had already been stowed, along with the pink linen napkins, silverware, wineglasses, and blue-and-white checked tablecloth. I examined the fit of my caving suit, which was made of a heavy-duty paper-towel-like material, and then I adjusted the headband on my miner's helmet.

An hour or so earlier, we'd landed next to the Artlish River, a narrow stream coursing through a dense stand of ancient balsam, cedar, spruce, and hemlock, and there we'd been introduced to the hyperkinetic and voluble Mr. Henwood, who launched a ten-minute monologue about the pleasures of mapping dark, slimy, treacherous holes in the earth: "What we have is a fabulous day planned for you guys. Here, there are two cave systems side by side—the Artlish and the Black Hole. We'll be hiking through the old-growth forest and then going entrance to entrance through the mountain, through the Black Hole. . . . I've been involved in cave systems for over twenty-five years. I come from a background of coal miners. I've lost seven uncles and four cousins—plus my grandfather, in the deepest mining disaster in the country. As a result of the Springhill mine disaster, in 1958, my grandfather is buried fourteen thousand feet from the surface, in Nova Scotia. So I guess you could say that I've got it in my blood to be in the underground. . . . It's been suggested that I hang back and let the group find its way through the forest to the cave and then, once we reach the cave, through the cave itself. We'll have a few obstacles, among them total darkness and what we call the boulder choke, where we'll be sliding down a few boulders, and climbing over and up some other boulders, until we enter what we call the mineral room, or the fossil chamber. There we'll be turning off our headlamps, and we'll be able to experience a sense of total darkness and to have people try to imagine how they would get back to the entrance. . . . There'll be a one-hundred-and-twenty-five-foot climb to exit the cave. All we ask from you is 'Yes, I can.' . . . You'll want to keep a low center of gravity—three points of contact with the rock at all times. . . . In some cases, a sprained ankle can lead to a fatality. . . . And, if you find that I talk too much today, oh, well. . . . "

The previous afternoon, Craig had told me, "People who come to Nimmo Bay make decisions three hundred and sixty-one days of the year. For the four days they're here, the one thing they don't want to do is make a decision. They're putting their total belief in us, that we can lead them safely and productively on the adventure of their choice."

Adventure of their choice? As a diverting weekend outing, everything was going swell. As a structured corporate adventure, however, it had begun to seem flawed. We needed a guide to accompany us inside the cave, true. But the object of experiential learning, as I understood it, was to use adventure as a tool for solving problems through group consensus. I began to wonder how our facilitator, Jane, was getting along. What, exactly, was she there to *facilitate*? Our crew's solution to finding the cave entrance, for instance, turned out to be a simple matter of entrusting the map and the compass to Tom Lundgren and Wayne Clogg, a pair of professional foresters. Along the trail, the vigilant and thoughtful Brenda Armstrong periodically warned "Bear shit!" and Michael cited other evidence that we were visitors rather than tenants: a scarred cedar that had been used as a scratching post by a cougar; a horsy fragrance of elk in the air. Otherwise, the hike in had been undramatic—a follow-the-leader trek up a root-tangled escarpment.

At the cave entrance—a garage-size opening in a limestone outcrop—Patrick Moore, who had once spent an afternoon snorkelling in a river inside a cave during a Mexican vacation, volunteered to lead. Soon enough, his role was superseded by Michael, an excessively enthusiastic guide. The rest of us were too busy groping and baby-stepping through a labyrinth rich with ligament-popping and ankle-snapping opportunities to protest that we were being denied the potential thrill of getting hopelessly lost. "Hey, Brenda!" said Sandy Lavigne as we skidded on our butts through the boulder choke. "Your paper suit isn't looking too clean. Is that



"This is the grand ballroom. I think it has a lot of potential."

cave dirt or did you shit yourself?" It was that sort of atmosphere—profanely lighthearted, and rooted, I assume, in our collective knowledge that Michael had been through the cave hundreds of times. As long as he didn't disappear into a crevasse, we'd clamber back into the daylight after two hours rather than, say, nine, or maybe never.

First, though, there was the allure of the mineral room, which I anticipated not because I was all that curious about its geology—crystallized iron embedded in volcanic rock—or even about its fossilized giant sea scorpions, but because I relished the tantalizing prospect of being able to see absolutely nothing only a few hours after my brain had been saturated by the viewscape from the helicopter. I could summon many memories of distinct encounters with bleakness—divorce, tax audit, oral surgery; two flat tires on the Bruckner Expressway. But pure, formless pitch-darkness? Not quite, not yet.

We scattered ourselves inside a space about the size of a multiplex screening room, turned off our headlamps on cue, and—behold! Double-blind, Black Hole blackness: eerie, inviting, potentially profound. But, alas, incomplete, because we'd forgotten to stipulate one other element of sensory deprivation: silence. Nancy Greene Raine was the first to speak. "We could light farts," she proposed. This reminded Craig of a fart joke, which he then shared. I forget the segue from the fart joke to the noise that bounced off the walls for the next ten minutes—a dialogue between Michael and Patrick about a logging company that had recently made impassable a bridge on one of its deactivated logging roads, thereby forcing Michael to hike an extra two kilometres whenever he escorted groups of recreational cavers to the very spot where we were sitting. No doubt the situation fell under the rubric of the forestry-and-tourism reciprocal-benefit-and-enhanced-resource-sustainability dialectic, and no doubt it could have waited until we'd exited the cave.

It was my own fault, I suppose, that I resisted the impulse to propose five minutes of mute contemplation. Instead, I sat there wiggling my fingers an inch from my nose, seeing nothing, wishing in vain for silent, tomblike still-

ADVENTURE

ADDICTED TO FLESH

ALTHOUGH human flesh may substitute in times of shortages for normal foodstuffs, cannibalism—as in the case of the Emperor Bokassa's deep freeze—is not necessarily the product of hunger. The matter was clarified for me back in the sixties, by Mr. Williams, an official in Liberia, when I called on him during a journey through his country. "Many of our countrymen are rarely able to fill their stomachs to satisfaction and may thus be tempted to turn to food resources prohibited by law," Mr. Williams said. "More common are crimes committed by persons of standing and education in search of what I will call tonic effect." He was referring to a case reported in that day's *Listener*—one of several similar accounts I had collected—in which a corpse that had been recovered in the early-morning hours from Monrovia's main street was found to be short of certain body parts, including the fleshy covering of the forehead and the palms of the hands. "This," said Mr. Williams, "is the work not of hungry men but of collectors of medicines." He listed several of these, including the Human Elephant Men, Snake People, Water People, and the most publicized and exclusive tonic-effect collectors of them all, the Negee Aquatic Cannibalistic Society, vigilant watchers of the waters of Monrovia for incautious swimmers. "In all such cases, very little is taken as food," Mr. Williams insisted. "Maybe just a snack. Not more."

For all Mr. Williams's opinions, however, real hunger lies behind the cannibalistic acts that are frequently reported in Central Africa. The insoluble food problem in this region was illustrated on a journey through the interior of Togo, when my driver admitted to me that he felt faint with hunger. The rare markets we passed offered nothing but malodorous snails twenty times the normal size, which he said he couldn't face. Finally, he managed to buy a large rat, which he cooked by the roadside and consumed; he was back at the wheel in about fifteen minutes, visibly transfigured by the experience.

After Africa, Irian Jaya, in Indonesia, comes next in the hunger stakes. In 1991, I flew to Endoman, the farthest airstrip visited by missionary planes, where I expected to gather first-hand information on the subject of cannibalism following a much publicized local massacre in 1974. At that time, the local tribes were very much under pressure by evangelists, who found it less trouble to install airstrips if they could start with levelled areas on which villages had been built. It seems that some villages were therefore demolished, and in a counter-attack more than a dozen evangelist deacons and a prominent preacher were killed and eaten. Mr. Williams's tonic effect of light snacks did not come into this operation—every scrap of the victims was ravenously consumed.

With what delicacy I could muster, I put my questions to a local tribesman through an interpreter. "They tell me you live largely on fleshy insects, caterpillars, sago, and roots. Do you ever eat meat?"

"If the rainy season has been good, we may kill a pig. This is very rare."

"And human meat. Do you eat that, too?"

"The police will not allow it."

"But everyone knows you did in the past."

The tiny, naked, smiling, supremely courteous man was eager to help in any way he could. "Sometimes," he said. "After a battle."

"Which did you prefer? This or the pig?"

"The pig does no work," he said. "Its meat is white, soft, and sweet. A man works. His flesh is yellow and hard. It is better than nothing." He was studying me speculatively and with what might have been modest approval. "If you had come here ten years ago," he said, "we would have eaten you." I suspected that this was to be taken as a compliment.

—NORMAN LEWIS

WINSTON SMITH

Call me Cooki
45

ness to wed the darkly darkened darkness. Michael and Patrick were still yakking away when a two-hundred-pound cougar came along and ate them both. A magnificent animal: white face, green-rimmed red eyes, dripping yellow fangs, a two-inch-thick mat of beige fur, a bit of an attitude problem. His presence in the cave was also my fault, but I couldn't help it. Sometimes what's missing from plutocratic adventure is that invigorating jolt of the improbable, that frisson triggered by a sudden wind blowing from the wrong direction. Sometimes a bloodthirsty beast insists upon being fed.

DID I feel guilty about allowing the cougar to devour Patrick? Sure, a little, but no, not really. He'd read the liability waiver before signing it; he'd been warned about the risks involved. Anyway, by the time we assembled in the lodge at Nimmo Bay the next morning—Jane wanted to "debrief" the caving adventure—Patrick looked and sounded like his garrulous old self. And I, meanwhile, had had a night in which to sleep off my disappointment, ballasted by ample portions of fresh steamed Dungeness crabs with five dipping sauces, marinated *ahi poke*, rose-petal-and-lemon sorbet, cornmeal-crusted salmon with mango-apple chutney, couscous and summer vegetables, and ginger crême brulée. I awoke with a renewed sense of purpose. While shaving, I remembered a sage observation of Craig's, that "Nimmo Bay was how God would have done it if he'd had money." Who could argue with that agenda?

The debriefing was brief. Jane asked us to sit in a circle and play a game that involved having each of us put one hand on the knee of the person on each side of us and setting in motion a series of "waves." I didn't understand the purpose of this activity, but Jane was an extremely attractive woman, and I found that I enjoyed having her hand on my knee and my hand on her knee, even if only in a strictly professional capacity. This exercise was followed by a discussion of safety issues, a topic of particular concern to Tom Lundgren. Before leaving the cave, we'd been required to scale a steeply pitched limestone shelf with the aid of a belay rope. Several members of the group, while awaiting their turns, had, in Tom's estimation, committed the cardinal error of standing within the fall zone—the area where a climber might land if he or she suddenly let go of the rope. During his twenty-odd-year career as a forester, Tom had obviously given a lot of thought to the unpleasant consequences of falling objects colliding with mortal flesh. For some reason, when he'd tried to call attention to this hazard inside the cave his warning had gone unheeded. Now, however, it was unanimously agreed that Tom was absolutely on the mark.

An artful facilitator grasps the nuances of group dynamics in a way that enables people to gain vital insights into themselves. I felt that, thanks to Tom, Jane at that moment was on the verge of some outstanding facilitating. But then Tom raised a separate issue, whose logic also seemed unassailable: "Why are we sitting inside having this discussion when we should be outside having fun?" Another point well taken, Tom!

Later that day, Wayne Clogg and Deane Strongitharm disappeared. I don't mean "disappeared" as in I-arranged-to-have-them-ingested-by-a-cougar-or-a-grizzly; they'd done nothing, at least as far as I was concerned, to deserve that. I mean that they'd only signed on for two of the four days, because they had to get back to the office. They stuck around for Day Two's excellent, if rather low-impact, adventures—whale-watching and beachcombing—and then, around five o'clock, back at Nimmo Bay, packed their bags and boarded a chopper. The rest of us stood on the dock and waved. I was sorry to see them go—they seemed like nice guys—and I knew in my bones that I would never see them again. Mindful of Bogey on the tarmac in "Casablanca," I had toyed with the idea of embracing each in a soulful but manly way and saying, "We'll always have Nimmo Bay," but our time together had been so fleeting, and we hadn't really been able to bond to our full potential.

REGARDING our white-water river-rafting expedition on Day Three: I'd like to take this opportunity to formally thank Sandy, Jane, Patrick, Brenda, Dominic, and both Nancys—and also Dick McMaster and Kevin Walker, a couple of tourism professionals who showed up to replace Wayne and Deane—for the fact that I didn't drown when all of them were my mates during two runs down the Wakeman River. I'd also like to thank these same people for whatever corrective maneuvers they performed to avoid going overboard while I was supposedly steering, or, to be precise, was not steering, the raft. (As everyone involved knows, I do not have to thank or apologize to Tom, because he presciently took advantage of the "challenge by choice" clause and elected not to go rafting, explaining, "I've been in cold water before.") As for the incident when I uttered some harsh-sounding invective—an episode that Nancy Johnson, to my regret, has preserved on videotape—I wish to say, in my defense, that the exhortation "God damn it, paddle, you mofos!" expressed concern not only for my safety but for theirs, as well. A very large tree, a "sweeper," in the local parlance, lay directly ahead of us in the river, we were moving in a swift current, the raft had begun to drift sidewise, and my own arms felt tired. The colloquialism "mofo" is not usually a term of endearment, but my deployment of it indicates that, at that moment, I embraced the others as colleagues-in-adventure rather than as third parties whom I was observing from a callously detached perspective while engaged in a journalistic pursuit. Finally, I want to assure Nancy Greene Raine, who, as I've mentioned, is a Canadian national hero and nobody's fool, that when, during the conclusion of my trip down the

THE PURIFICATION OF SPACE FOR DOROTHY

She has hair the color of rust.
She wears a red dress
and three watches:
one for her daughter in California,
one for her daughter in New York,
and one for her sister in Scotland.
She smokes cigarette after cigarette.
She takes lithium and tells everyone,
"Love, and do what you want."

She listens to the same play on the radio
and tries to convince me
that Ibsen is American.

"He was like me, of course.
He can't be anything else."

She has a lover who works for God, she says.
"I've never met him,
so I wear this red dress
so he will recognize me
and know I am the fire."

I pretend not to understand her.
I pretend I'm in a hurry
when she asks me, almost silently,
"What do you do
up in your apartment:
do you laugh or do you cry?"
I would like to answer her.

I would like to take her hand with three watches
and caress her
as if she were an orphan,
but she is on fire.

Below our mailboxes,
each morning,
she leaves a cup full of coffee,
a pack of cigarettes,
and, near them, a card which says,
"Live your life in beauty.
I leave these so you may partake,
as if in the body and blood of Christ."

When she meets me running up or down the stairs,
she says the same thing:
"Fly if you want, but don't run.
God loves us all,
but those who fly he loves the most."

Quietly, Dorothy with rusty hair
and dress red as fire
sings,
"Raspberries ripen only in summer,
only when I dream of my love,"
and she shows me her empty wallet.
"Everything I touch turns to gold," she says,
"then into silver, then to tears."

—LILIANA URSU

(*Translated, from the Romanian, by the author and Bruce Weigl.*)

river with her, she yelled "Shark!" and I leaped to my feet and almost capsized us, this was not because I believed an actual shark lurked nearby but because at that very moment I experienced an uncomfortable cramping in my quadriceps.

In the afterglow of our rafting trip, as we were about to take our seats for the farewell banquet—an eight-course Japanese-theme feast that started out with what seemed like a kilogram apiece of sushi and sashimi and then, let's just say, got carried away—Craig rested a hand on my shoulder and said, "I want you to fly with me tomorrow. Rob will be our pilot."

I rode up front the next day. The flight itinerary began with a leisurely sightseeing tour: rivers running gray-green with glacial flour; the "paint pots," a mountainside with an above-the-tree-line panorama of colors caused by large amounts of basalt, iron, granite, copper, and molybdenum; a lake turned cobalt-blue by oxygen trapped beneath the frozen surface, its banks dusted by reddish windborne spores. Craig had handpicked the soundtrack on our Bose headsets: "Rocky Mountain High" and electronic mood-setting by the New Age group Enigma. Our first landing zone was in a mile-high meadow that would have been a heli-hiking destination except that the previous winter's snowfall still lay on the ground, more than three feet deep. Plastic toboggans were distributed and we rode them down a gentle slope.

Our lunch spot was a precipice above the Kingcome Glacier—a five-thousand-one-hundred-foot perch that on a clear day afforded a sixty-mile vista of the British Columbia coastal mountain range. "Now," Craig said, as we hovered divinely, "I'd appreciate it if for the next five minutes no one would speak."

I thought, Cool. Silence at last. The Black Hole redeemed.

It turned out that what Craig had in mind wasn't absolute silence but a properly contemplative mind with which to absorb the Wagnerian bombast of the theme from "Godzilla" as the glacier drew near. Then, as we touched down and the rotors decelerated, came Louis Armstrong's classic, gleaming-smiled version of "What a Wonderful World." And, after the Satchmo, Genoa salami melts on walnut bread.

Before we returned to Nimmo Bay to gather our belongings and depart, Jane persuaded Craig to land the helicopters on a sandbar in the Wakeman River, where she conducted a purposeful, though highly abbreviated, closing ceremony. One of the bywords at Project Adventure is "bringing the adventure home." Accordingly, Jane felt it was vital that the group coin a slogan "expressing their unified vision and connectedness . . . a sense of mission that will gather their divergent agendas and consolidate them with a common theme." Ideally, she would have preferred an hour to devote to this endeavor, but she'd been at Nimmo Bay long enough to grasp that her priorities conflicted with Craig's notion of a fitting valedictory ritual, which inclined toward a final group soak in the hot tub followed by a convivial sit-down in the gift shop, where he could present everyone with an invoice in the mid-four figures. A ten-minute discussion on the sandbar yielded the motto "Tourism and Forests: Seeing the Forest and the Trees," after which everyone agreed to exchange E-mail addresses and business cards and uphold the ideals of the forestry-tourism accord.

Back in Nimmo Bay, I considered joining the crowd in the hot tub, but I had packing to do, which included permanently borrowing some scented soap and a couple of those handy little travel-size aerosol shaving-cream dispensers. I was on an expense account, it's true, but, still, I felt I'd earned them. When Dominic summoned me to the gift shop ("Mr. Murray wishes to see you in his office"), I presented my credit card and noticed that Craig was smiling broadly—not a perma-grin, but a look of true happiness. "You know how most hotels have little signs in the rooms that say 'Have You Left Anything?' " he said. "I'm considering getting some printed up that say 'Have You Anything Left?' Hey, you're a writer. What do you think?" ♦

PROFILE

SWIMMING WITH SHARKS

Lynne Cox's strange mission
to cross the world's darkest waters.

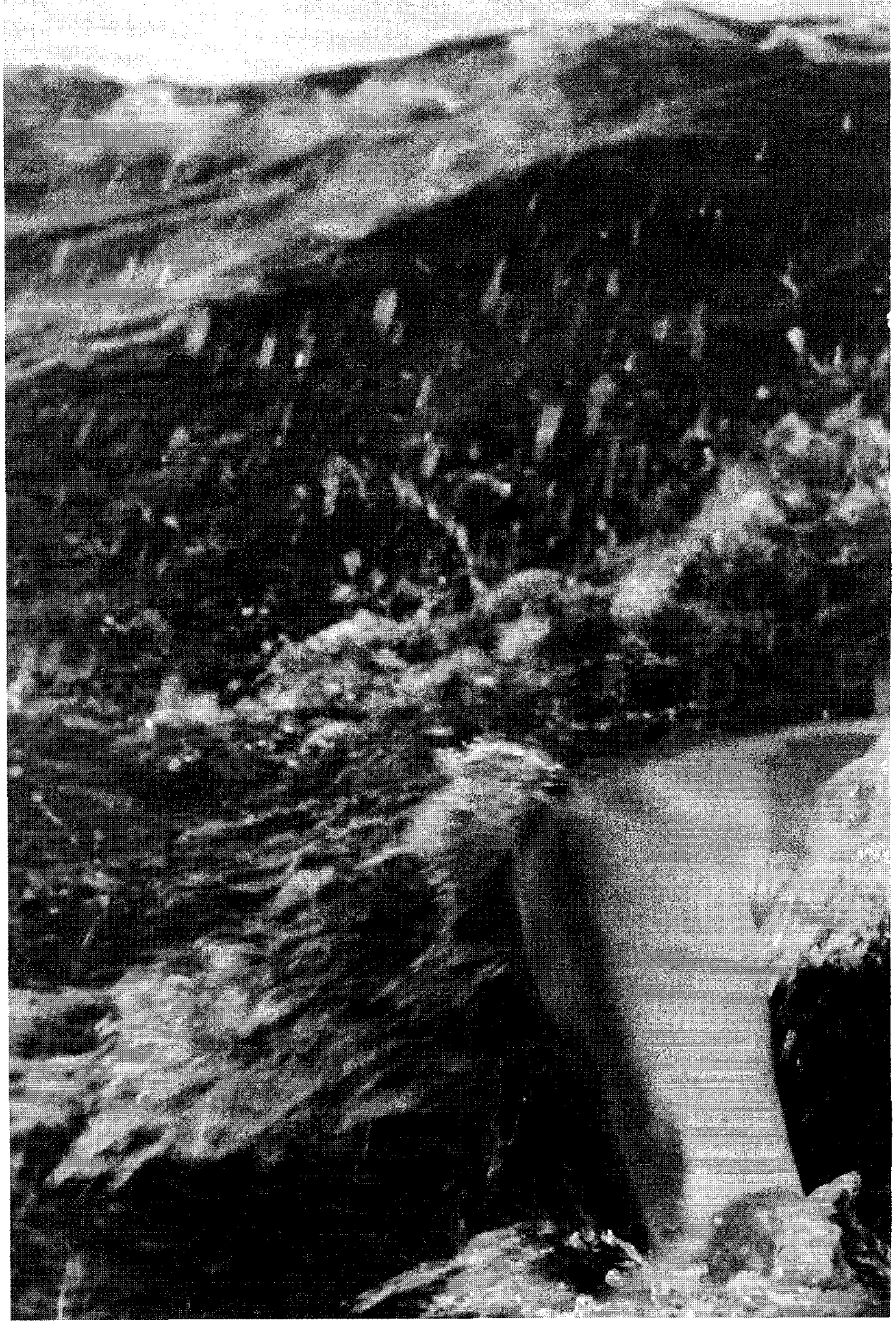
BY CHARLES SPRAWSON

SOME say the bravest of swims was Ted Erikson's in 1967, when he survived the thirty miles from the Farallon Islands to the Golden Gate Bridge, San Francisco, a trek that took him through waters in which there are more shark attacks than anywhere else in the world. But Lynne Cox's attempt on the Bering Strait was without doubt the most remarkable.

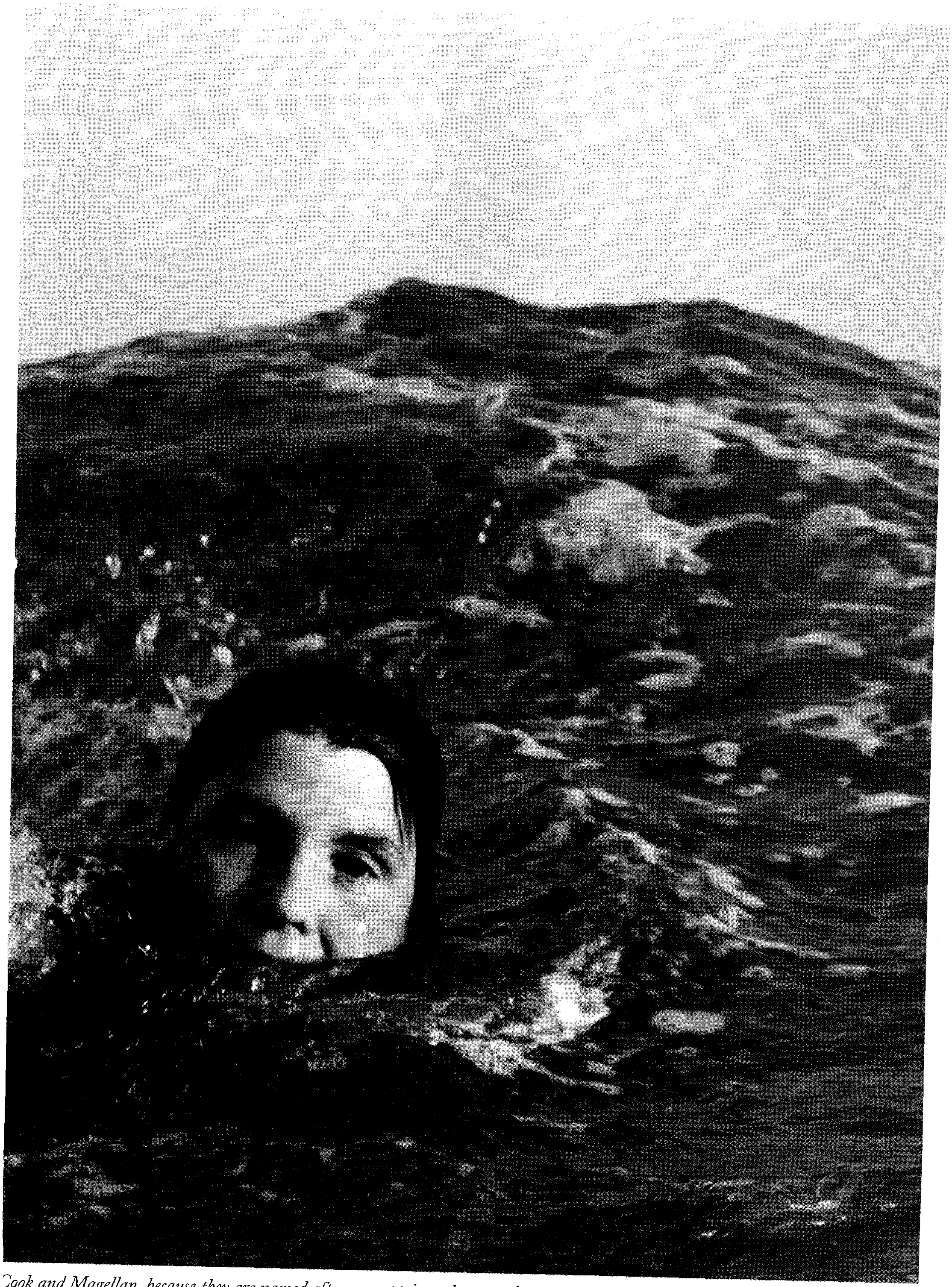
At 9:30 A.M. on August 7, 1987, Cox, a thirty-year-old marathon swimmer, jumped feet first from a rock on the shore of Little Diomede island into the frigid Arctic Ocean and set out for Big Diomede, nearly two and a half miles away. The Diomedes, tiny volcanic islands, situated between Alaska and Siberia, that rise abruptly from the ocean floor, are the peaks of a submarine ridge that once connected the two continents. The international date line bisects the channel between them and forms the boundary line between the United States and Russia. These territorial waters, which are strictly guarded, had not been open to boats since 1948, and had never been swum.

Cox's father had come up with the idea of swimming between the Diomedes back in 1976, when American-Soviet relations were at a low ebb, to show just how close the superpowers were. It had taken Lynne Cox eleven years of negotiation, at the highest government levels, before the Bering Strait swim was authorized, and final permission from the Soviets had been granted only the day before. During those years, Cox had been training and, with the help of medical tests, preparing her body for water temperatures that would kill most human beings within thirty minutes.

Cox had been advised by the Naval Arctic Research Laboratory to expect a strong northerly flow of water through the channel, causing eddies and currents of up to three miles per hour, along with winds that could vary abruptly from periods of calm to gale force. Although the islands were only 2.4 miles apart, Cox would be forced by the currents to swim at least twice as far. The water temperature in the Strait, which freezes over during the long winter months, would vary from thirty-four degrees Fahrenheit to forty-four. She was warned about the presence of walruses and sharks, particularly the fifteen-foot Great Pacific shark, though it wasn't known if Great Pacifics in the Strait would attack humans. Yet



Cox says she is drawn to dangerous places that intimidate ships, and to straits lik



Cook and Magellan, because they are named after sea captains who opened up a new world. Photograph by Fergus Greer.

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Cox refused artificial aid: she would not use a shark cage, or wear a wetsuit, or even coat her body in lanolin grease. Her only form of protection was her swimsuit.

She had arranged to be accompanied by two umiaks—walrus-skin canoes—belonging to the Inuits who lived on Little Diomede in a settlement of shacks clinging to a cliff face. The local mayor, a cynic who wore a baseball cap that said "Patrick was a saint but I ain't," had insisted on five thousand dollars as a fee for the boats, believing that this was a chance to make money for the desolate community, whose livelihood came from seal-hunting and selling scrimshaw on the mainland. Cox, who had borrowed money from her parents to get to Little Diomede and was living on bagels and peanut butter for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, eventually bargained him down to five hundred dollars. Two Soviet naval vessels were due to meet her at the boundary.

When Cox entered the Arctic Ocean, the water temperature was, at forty-four degrees, comparable to a glass of iced water; if she had dived in head first, the sudden impact could have stopped her heart beating. Once she was in the sea, she said later, she concentrated on making her body move, to avoid focussing on the pain she felt. A dense fog had descended, which calmed the surface of the water but also made it impossible for her to see her destination. The umiaks started leaking immediately and had to be bailed out with empty Coca-Cola cans. One boat contained five journalists and the other three doctors, including Bill Keatinge, an erudite Englishman from London University, whose particular field of research was the effect of cold on the human body.

At the beginning of the year, Cox had got in touch with Keatinge and asked if there was a medical system that could register her temperature during the swim: it was essential that her inner body temperature never drop below ninety-three degrees. Keatinge recommended a thermosensitive capsule containing a tiny transmitter which had been devised for astronauts. She swallowed the capsule before the swim, and every twenty minutes while she was in the ocean she rolled on to her back and one of the doctors pointed a radio receiver at her stomach in order to register a digital reading. As a further precaution, a rectal thermometer on a lead was inserted into her body and the wire coiled into her swimsuit. If the capsule did not work, a reading could be taken from the thermometer.

The doctors were in a continuous state of apprehension, but Cox remained calmer than the seals in the Arctic Ocean; several rose to the surface to gaze quizzically at this intruder. Every so often, the boats got lost in the fog as Cox sprinted ahead, and she was forced to shout back through the mist to make sure that she was swimming in the right direction. She crossed the boundary after an hour and a half; then one of the journalists thought he could hear an engine, and suddenly the bow of a ship emerged through the fog. The Russians invited the two umiaks to follow them. As they crossed the date line, a journalist called out "It's tomorrow!" and everyone cheered.

Fifty yards from shore, the fog cleared, and the cliffs of Big Diomede loomed above Cox. The closest point of land was a rock directly ahead of her, but a welcoming committee was waiting to receive her half a mile away on a snowbank. Cox knew that a deep trough developed where the island sloped down to the ocean floor, through which a sudden current, with thirty-eight-degree water, raced north into the Chukchi Sea. The ocean here was like a washing machine, with cold water churned up from below and driven out into the Arctic waste. To go that extra half mile would mean swimming against the current. "You should land now," the doctors said, but she refused. The object of her swim was, in her words, "to reach out to the Soviets." She explained later, "Touching a rock rather than someone's hand would have meant so much less. I had to keep on reaching, going." She swam close to the rock to avoid the strongest part of the current, then turned south. Finally, after two hours and six minutes in the water, she struggled up the ice on the beach and felt the warmth of two Russian hands hoisting her. She was engulfed in blankets and presented with a bouquet of flowers and a pair of sealskin slippers. Surprisingly, her inner temperature had remained constant for much of the swim, but after she'd had a brief interview with Soviet television and walked seventy-five yards to a recovery tent, her temperature dropped to ninety-four—borderline hypothermia. She was slurring her words and having difficulty walking. When she slumped to the ground in the recovery tent, a Soviet woman wrapped herself around Cox in order to keep her warm. The Russians and the Americans then celebrated Cox's achievement with a tea party, prepared by a chef in a white uniform. Tables had been set out on the beach and covered with white cloths, and samovars were placed on top.

At the end of that year, Mikhail Gorbachev flew to Washington to sign the I.N.F. treaty, which would reduce the number of nuclear missiles. At an official dinner given by President Reagan in his honor, Gorbachev cited Cox's swim as a symbol of the thawing relations between the two countries. "It took one brave American by the name of Lynne Cox just two hours to swim from one of our countries to the other. We saw on television how sincerely amiable was the meeting between our people and Americans when she stepped on to the Soviet shore. She proved by her courage how closely to each other our peoples live." Reagan was mystified by this tribute. The national-security adviser had to call the State Department to find out whom Gorbachev was referring to.

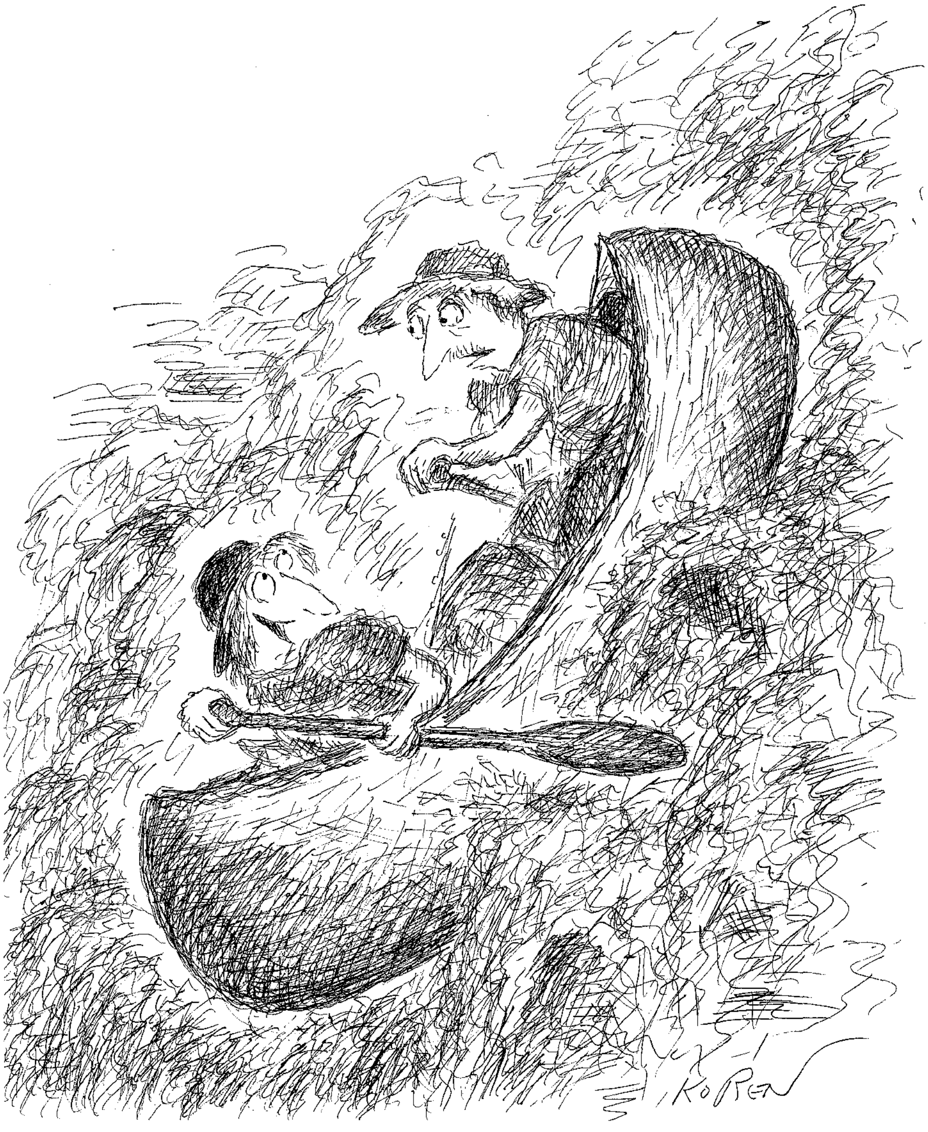
Today, at the age of forty-two, Lynne Cox lives with her parents in Los Alamitos, a few miles from the great beaches that line the California coast below Los Angeles. Los Alamitos is a quiet suburb distinguished by a good fish restaurant and avenues of palm and cottonwood trees. When Cox is not preparing for her swims, she writes articles and short stories, gives lectures to business executives, and coaches swimmers. (One current student is an opera singer who, like Frank Sinatra, feels that swimming might improve her singing.)

A large harbor scene painted by Cox's mother hangs in her room. On top of a bookcase are the sealskin slippers; its shelves are crammed with copies of *National Geographic.* There are no trophies to impress the visitor—they were discarded or donated to a local museum years ago. The Coxes' home is an unremarkable, well-ordered place, but from the confines of that domesticity Cox plans her forays to some of the most desolate and far-flung places in the world, often venturing into seas and lakes where no one has swum before.

LORD BYRON was one of the first to swim through dark waters and over great depths, and he did so at a time when the submarine world was still relatively unknown. He crossed the Hellespont, from what is now European Turkey to what is now Asian Turkey, on May 3, 1810, in emulation of Leander's legendary swims to his lover, Hero. The distance is little more than a mile, but the current made it so arduous that Byron doubted "whether Leander's conjugal powers must not have been exhausted in his passage to Paradise." He later wrote of his crossing, "I plume myself on this achievement more than I could possibly do any kind of glory, political, poetical, or rhetorical."

The greatest swim in the history of marathon swimming, however, was Captain Matthew Webb's conquest of the English Channel, in 1875, and the most sensational was the American Gertrude Ederle's triumph there in 1926, when she became the first woman to swim across—using the crawl all the way—and beat the existing record by two hours. On her return to New York, she was greeted by sirens, flowers showering down from planes, and a ticker-tape parade; the enthusiasm for her welcome equalled that for Charles Lindbergh the following year. Captain Webb drowned in 1883 while attempting to swim the rapids below Niagara Falls, in a suicidal bid for "money and imperishable fame." A crowd of ten thousand watched Webb disappear beneath the waves after he cracked open his head on a series of submerged rocks that surrounded a whirlpool where the river bends.

Webb's death was unfortunate, but his financial enterprise and his flair for self-promotion would have appealed to William Wrigley, Jr., the chewing-gum millionaire. In 1927, Wrigley instituted the first professional swimming race in the world: competitors would swim from Catalina Island, twenty miles off the



"We're really bonding now, aren't we, Dad?"

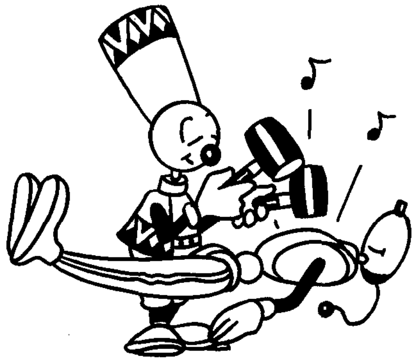
coast of Southern California, to the mainland for a first prize of twenty-five thousand dollars. He had just bought the island as a commercial proposition, and, impressed by Ederle's reception in New York the previous year, concocted the pageant to solve the problem of a lack of tourists in California during the winter months. Some fifteen thousand spectators watched the winner swim home at three in the morning, illuminated by the searchlights of yachts. Wrigley's venture was so successful that he inaugurated an annual twenty-one-mile race on Lake Ontario for a prize of thirty thousand dollars. Other businessmen followed his example, in bays and lakes all over America, and further afield—in Yugoslavia, South America, Australia, Mexico, Italy, England, and Egypt. Like modern golfers or tennis players on tour, the same group of swimmers would assemble in various parts of the world to compete for large amounts of money.

Marathon swimmers are a different breed from short-distance swimmers. Compared with the long, lithe, and adolescent figures you see in the Olympics, marathon swimmers appear in photographs to be built like bisons rather than like cheetahs, with gnarled faces and stubborn expressions, their pendulous breasts and stomachs drooping down to stubby legs. (Only the Dane Greta Andersen has excelled in both forms of competition. After winning the gold medal in the hundred-metre freestyle in the Olympic Games in 1948, she won the English Channel race twice and became one of the greatest open-water swimmers in the world.)

These swimmers need a tenacity and a stocky build to withstand the impact of waves and tides, the sudden nausea inflicted by oil slicks and bilge, the prolonged effects of salt water, which causes the lips and tongue to swell and reduces the face to something resembling fungus. So intense and concentrated are the conditions that marathon swimmers become prey to delusions and neuroses that are often beyond the experiences of other athletes. The huge distances that the swimmers cover, sometimes up to sixty miles, can bring on hallucinations. In 1961, in the first back-to-back swim of the English Channel, the Argentine Tony Abertondo imagined posts and dogs obstructing his path over the last two miles. During the same swim four years later, Ted Erikson saw his pilot boat suddenly fade into a black smear and then turn into a rosebush, at which point he found that there were roses growing all around him. In May, 1975, Ben Haggard, a New York policeman, attempted to swim from Florida to Nassau, across the so-called Bermuda Triangle, using a shark cage. As night fell, floodlights from the boats accompanying him revealed sharks circling his cage. Haggard recalled feeling the presence of a hostile force. "I had this feeling that something wanted me to come out through the door," he said afterward. "I knew what would happen, with the sharks outside, but the urge was irresistible. I swam over and grabbed the trapdoor. I was shaking, but I held on to it. I kept saying to myself: I am not going to let it take me out of the cage, whatever it is."

Swimming, particularly long-distance swimming, appeals to the solitary and the eccentric. An informal survey of fourteen champion long-distance swimmers concluded that only two of them were swimming under no particular stress, while the others were all reacting to severe emotional tension. No one knows, for example, why Britt Sullivan, a hard-drinking former Wave from Nebraska, decided to swim the Atlantic Ocean in 1964. She lost touch with her escort boat off Fire Island, twenty miles from her starting point, and was never seen again.

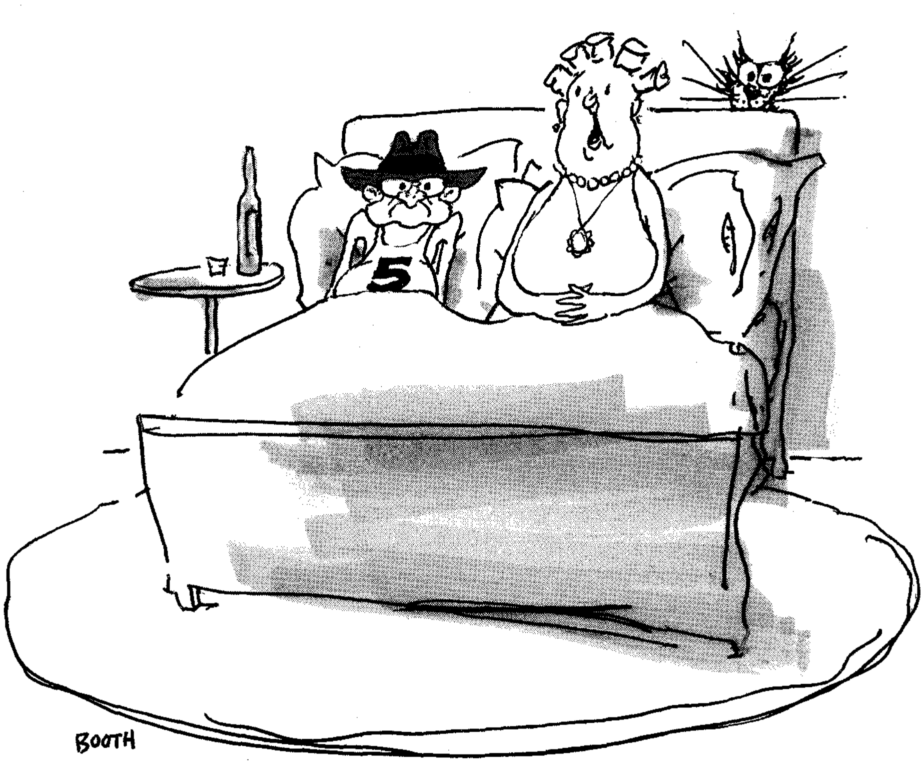
Lynne Cox appears to be devoid of neuroses and delusions, yet no doubt the long hours she has spent submerged in water have made her in some ways remote. Her endeavors seem to defy the limits of human possibility: she was the first swimmer to cross the Strait of Magellan, among the most treacherous stretches of water in the world; she has swum through Lake Baikal, one of the deepest, longest, and coldest lakes in the world. She follows a solitary course: the impulse behind her swims has been hers, as are the organization and negotiation. She is no longer registered with the United States Swimming Association, because races don't interest her, nor does prize money. The purpose of her swims is not to promote rivalry but to create harmony.



For Cox, swimming is an "emotional and spiritual necessity," a phrase used by George Mallory, the mountaineer, to describe his own compulsion to dive into any lake or river that he came upon. Cox is drawn to the challenge of a confrontation with nature—a struggle perhaps familiar to mountain climbers. "It involves a lot of planning, training, and physical obstacles," she says of marathon swimming. "In a pool, you know there's a finish, because there are two walls. In a marathon swim or a mountain climb, you are never sure. There is a much higher risk involved. Basically, you can die." If there is one image, now that all sports are so commercial and technologically sophisticated, that grips the imagination as much as Mallory, dressed like a gamekeeper and glimpsed through a brief break in the clouds, "going strong for the top," it is that of Lynne Cox, virtually naked, forcing her way through the waves of the Bering Strait.

I FIRST met Lynne Cox by the Pacific, earlier this summer, among the palms of the Hotel Laguna. The hotel, built in 1888, was once dedicated to glamour, but now it is the haunt of earnest couples who seem intent on closing deals and analyzing "relationships." Cox, with her generous smile, lilting voice, and long black hair, appeared to be everything they were not. Like the two plain syllables of her name, Cox was simple and direct. I had been drawn originally to American swimmers by their names, redolent of romance and dash—Donna deVarona, Casey Converse, Chet Jastremski, Zac Zorn—but Cox was in a different category.

We changed and went to swim. The outline of Catalina showed through the haze in the distance. There had been a storm the night before; waves hammered the shore and threw me onto a rock. Cox laughed and shouted that at the start of her swim around the Cape of Good Hope, in 1978, she had had to dive through waves four times as high. At five feet six inches and a hundred and eighty pounds, she is not particularly tall or lean; in fact, her body is between thirty and thirty-five per cent fat. (Most women's bodies are between eighteen and twenty-five per cent.) What makes her body remarkable, according to doctors who have tested her, is an "even" covering of fat that acts like a wetsuit; the porpoise bulk of her build forms a protective surface that keeps the temperature of her inner body normal in extreme conditions. Most of her power seems to derive from her mermaid hips. She doesn't have the orangutan arms and shoulders of a shorter-distance swimmer, but as we swam I noticed that she kept up a rhythmic, consistent stroke, zigzagging her hand viciously underwater, where it counts. She seemed to melt into the water. (To achieve a similar effect, East German swimmers were rumored to inject gas into their colons.) Her skin looked so smooth that I asked her if she went through the ritual of shaving before a swim, like Olympic swimmers, but she told me that long-distance swimmers preserve body hair for greater insulation.



"Mr. Goodrich, what say we tell each other our darkest fantasies and start exploring the outer limits of modern sexuality."

• •

A harmless jellyfish floated by, which reminded her of the worst jellyfish she had encountered, in warm waters off Sweden. They were "red, yellow, and transparent—the size of a garbage-can lid—with long tentacles that slammed into my face and burned my body," she said. "Every stroke was tentative and I could never relax—I would swim onto the back of one before realizing I was in the middle of it."

As we swam, Cox spoke of her childhood in New Hampshire, and summer holidays her family spent in Maine, on a lake called Snow Pond, where she swam all day and often at night, too, when she was "sticky with sweat." She described her sense of relief on entering the black water, recalling "the smell of pine accentuated at night, the moonlight that turned the edge of the shore to silver." Frogs and snakes and sandfish snatched at her body. Swimming among white and yellow water lilies, she would dive down through the clear water to follow the long stems that attached the flowers to the sandy bottom. A mile out, in the middle of the lake, there was an island that she always wanted to swim to. Years later, she went back to the lake. "I swam around to the original smooth, sloping stone from which I entered the lake as a child," she told me. "I slid off it again and swam out to the island, across a surface disfigured by jet skis and motorboats." At the end of each summer, she hated returning to the local public pool. She loathed the routine and the regimentation, the innumerable laps spent staring at a black line on the bottom of the pool.

In 1969, when she was twelve, her father, a radiologist, moved the family from the East Coast to California. His experience in the Medical Corps on Iwo Jima during the war had turned him into an idealist, and he determined to bring up his four children in a healthy climate and make them all into good swimmers, believing that swimming extended the body more safely than any other sport. In California, Cox started training with a swimming coach, Don Gambril, who was also the coach of the Olympic team. He noticed that she picked up the pace only after a mile, and so had no prospects as an Olympic swimmer, and he encouraged her instead to join a group of young swimmers who were training for the open sea. "Suddenly I felt released from a cage. I was actually going somewhere, not merely back and forth," Cox recalls. "I felt exhilarated by the challenge of swimming against the current and into the waves." When the group swam from Catalina Island to the mainland, Cox was so far ahead of the other swimmers that she had to tread water while they caught up. She was then fourteen.

She returned to Catalina in 1974 to break the record. She started at night, when conditions are usually most favorable. "The whole atmosphere seems somehow refined," she says, "and you feel you are really swimming on the upper inches of the ocean." But on this occasion fog descended five miles offshore. Cox became separated from her escort boat. "I felt the sea welling up around me and huge shapes brush up against my body," she recalls. "Within half an hour, I became hysterical." The boat found her shortly afterward, and she gave up the attempt.

When we finished our swim, we lay on the sand and watched the body of a dead seal drifting about in the shallows; its head had been snapped off by a shark. Although Cox swims often in shark-infested seas, she refuses to use a cage, believing that it divorces a swimmer from the elements and creates currents and conditions of its own, sometimes causing a drag that can help a swimmer along. She says that this is "unfair—like climbing Everest on an escalator." On two attempts made by marathon swimmers to cross from Cuba to Florida which I followed, cages were used. One swimmer was able to relax motionless for hours while being towed along;

the other took a ten-minute break every two miles to stand on the bars while he prayed and consulted his psychiatrist.

The first time Cox swam from Catalina Island, she was warned that fear reduces energy. In order to avoid thinking of sharks, she concentrated on her hands moving through the water and the phosphorescent bubbles trailing off her fingertips. She has always managed to divert her mind from what may lurk below the surface. She was forced to confront reality once, however, when a frogman who was protecting her as she swam around the Cape of Good Hope shot a shark that had emerged from the kelp, its jaws wide open, and was making straight for her. She was almost home, but had to sprint the final four hundred yards—a cloud of blood was attracting other sharks.

Sometimes, Cox admitted to me, reflections of clouds could assume sinister shapes in the water and affect her imagination. I asked her how she felt when she studied navigational charts and discovered, as the light blue on the map gradually turned to dark, the depths over which she would be swimming. I wanted to know what went through her mind as she peered down through goggles into two or three miles of water. Anything can rise out of that shadowy line ten or fifteen feet below a swimmer, where the shafts of sunlight fade into blackness. At this point, her insouciance momentarily faltered and she seemed almost to shudder; then she quickly told me to stop my questions.

THE English Channel is the ultimate goal of any long-distance swimmer. Cox first became aware of it at the age of nine, even though she had no idea where it was. She was swimming in an outdoor pool in New Hampshire when "there was a sudden hailstorm and strong winds sent waves racing across the surface of the pool," she recalls. "Everyone was ordered to get out and practice calisthenics indoors. Only I remained, and I exulted in the conditions." When she finally did emerge, a woman at the pool predicted that one day Cox would swim the Channel.

In 1972, when she was fifteen, she felt ready for an attempt. Her coach, however, thought her too inexperienced. At this critical moment, she met a Coptic Egyptian living in California called Fahmy Attallah, who describes himself as a "clinical humanist psychologist." He had attempted the Channel on five occasions,

ADVENTURE

BLACK SEA BLUES

I COULD have been the first man to surf the Black Sea. I got off a bus in a coastal village somewhere in northern Turkey, and there it was: brown and misty and full of mediocre, blown-out waves, dribbling in from the general direction of Odessa. This was 1970. I was a hippie surf punk from California, dialled in to the world surf underground (if not much else), and was therefore fairly certain that the Black Sea hadn't been surfed. I didn't have a board, but I figured I'd find something to ride. The beach was deserted, but I saw in the distance a couple of decrepit cafés at the edge of the sand. One of them probably had an old German paddleboard lying around. The water would feel good. I'd have something cool to claim. Instead, I turned and trudged inland through hot, scrubby dunes, got to the middle of nowhere, and had a little nervous breakdown.

My problem, Doctor, was freedom. I was seventeen, and I had taken advantage of a certain lapse in cultural authority to declare myself a sovereign state. That summer, my girlfriend and I were bumming around Western Europe, living on crackers and fresh air, sleeping under the stars. C., also seventeen, also from California, but less callow than I, had grown tired of the merciless pace I set—the gruelling pilgrimages to rock festivals (Bath) and surf towns (Biarritz) and the old haunts (and graves) of my favorite writers—and she'd finally dug in her heels on the western Greek island of Corfu after I announced that I had a burning desire to see more "Turkish influence." I could go hunt for Ottoman minarets on my own, she said. And so I up and left her on the remote, mountain-backed beach where we'd been camping au naturel. Neither of us, I suppose, believed I would really do it, but I was adept at, if nothing else, moving quickly through strange territory at low cost, and within a week I was in Turkey itself, newly intent on travelling overland to India. Motion, new companions, new lands were my drugs in those days—I found they did wonders for addled adolescent nerves. Turkish influence had fascinated me for about half an hour. Now only Tamil influence would do.

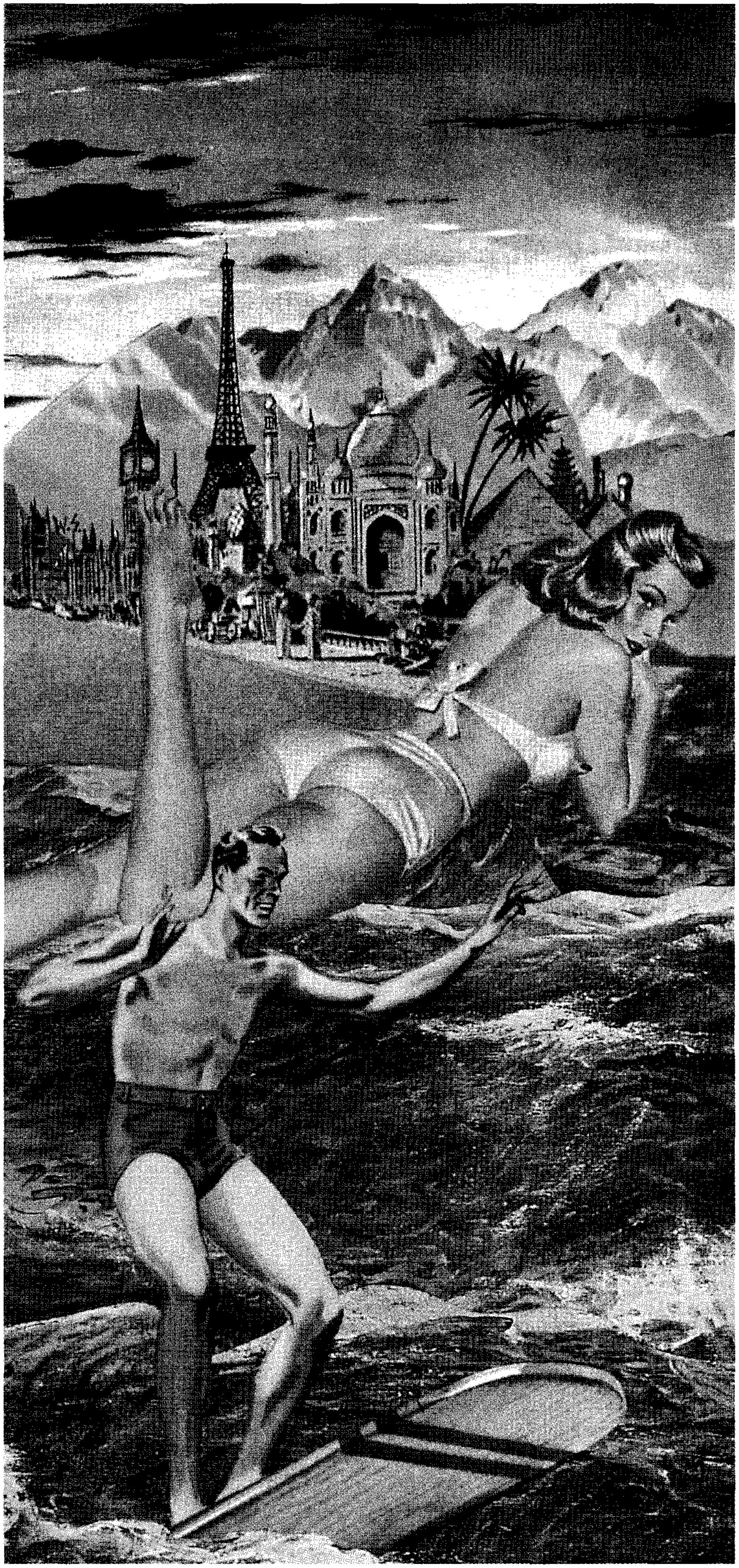
But something about that Black Sea beach brought it all to a grinding halt. The emptiness, the silence, the familiar but unexpected sight of surf, the beckoning goofy feat. Had I really left my girl alone in the boondocks in Greece? Nubile, smart-mouthed, tenderhearted C., whose mother, once she saw that we were actually catching that rattletrap charter to London, had ordered me desperately to watch out for her baby? I looked back now and felt like Orpheus seeing Eurydice get sucked down into Hades, except that I hadn't tried to rescue her; I'd just abandoned her on the trail. My lust for new scenes, new adventures, had seemed all-important. It wasn't. At least, it vanished in a bitter puff as I lay there in the Turkish scrub and dogs barked and darkness fell and I saw myself not as the dauntless leading lad of my own shining road movie but as a hapless fuckup: deadbeat boyfriend, overgrown runaway, scared kid in need of a shower. Also far, very far, from home.

The next morning, I started back toward Europe. I got picked up by a kind journalist and his family from Ankara, who took me to a resort on the Sea of Marmara. They fed me, washed my clothes, studied me wonderingly. I was, for them, an outrider from a wild new Western tribe—children who had suddenly won, somehow, unprecedented amounts of permission. For me, the question was becoming: Permission to do what? I wrote the family a midnight thank-you note and split without saying goodbye.

Europe turned out to be harder to reënter than it had been to leave. There was a cholera scare, and the borders with Greece and Bulgaria were closed. I bounced around Istanbul, walking along the Bosporus, sleeping on roofs. I tried to go to Romania, but Ceauşescu's sentinels reckoned I was a decadent parasite and refused me a visa. Then the police raided a flophouse where I was staying. They arrested three Brits, who were convicted the next day of hashish possession and sentenced to several years each. I moved to another roof. I wrote brave, boastful postcards: hey, no photograph could do justice to the beauty of the Blue Mosque.

But I was frantic about C. Although she had said that she would find her way to Germany, where we had friends,

WINSTON SMITH



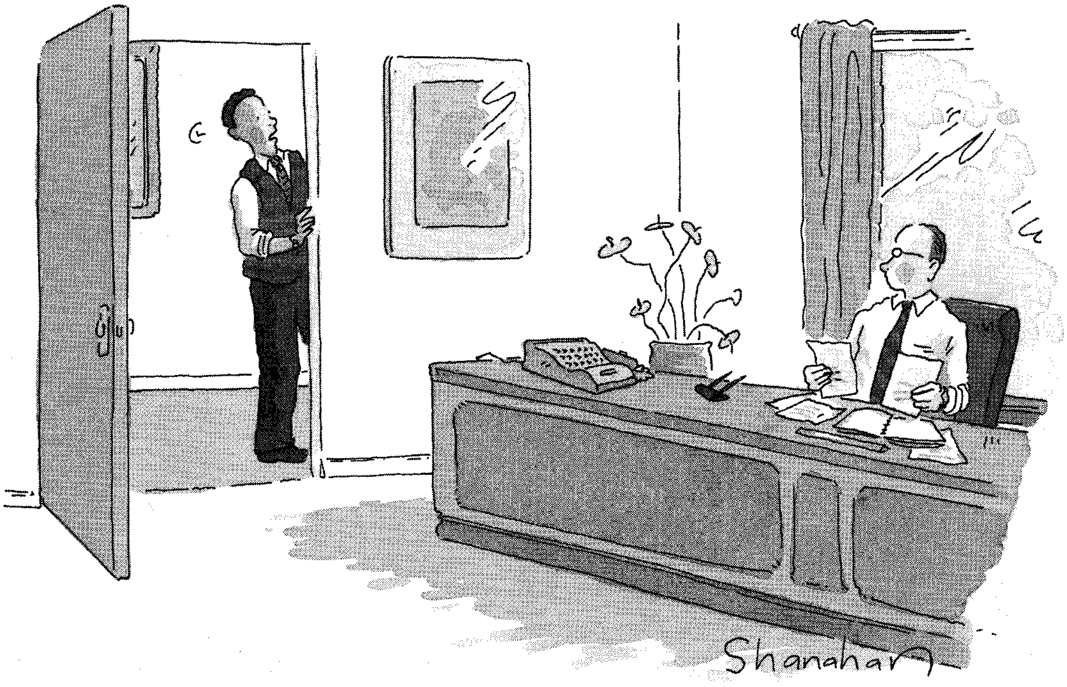
I kept imagining the worst. I bought her a cheap purse in the Grand Bazaar. I befriended other stranded Westerners. Finally, I broke down and phoned home. It took all day to get through. Hanging around the vast old post office: an idle, scruffy foreigner, heretically long-haired, squatting like a beggar in the shadows, offending the eyes of busy clerks and shop owners running their workday errands. Then the connection was awful. My mother's voice sounded terribly frail, as though she had aged fifty years. I kept asking what was wrong. I told her I was in Istanbul, but I still hadn't asked for news of C.—nor mentioned that I hadn't seen her in weeks—when the line went dead.

In the end, I bribed some Bulgarian border guards, made my way through the Balkans and over the Alps, and found C. in a campground near Munich. She was fine. A little wary. Yes, I said, I'd got my fill of Turkish influence. She accepted the purse. We resumed our rambles: Switzerland, the Black Forest, Paris. In Amsterdam, we heard that Jimi Hendrix would be playing in Rotterdam. We planned to go. Then, suddenly, Hendrix was dead. This was a couple of weeks before Janis Joplin. (Jim Morrison was the following July.) It was slowly becoming obvious that not all of us would get out of this funhouse alive.

C. and I flew home. I started college. The structure suited me—for a year. Then I dropped out and moved to Hawaii to live in a car and surf. C., though doubtful, came along. I worked in a bookstore. She worked in an ice-cream parlor. She hung in there for quite a while, really. And then she didn't.

I later became a foreign correspondent. Sometimes, though, I feel like I'm still in Istanbul, 1970. My addiction, never conquered, to the remote leads me over some distant horizon, deep into the peculiar intellectual ecstasies of the unfamiliar, and then into nineteenth-nervous-breakdown territory, and then I'm scrambling to find my way home. Meanwhile, I've left those whom I should be looking after to fend for themselves. My freedom problem persists, Doc. But—have you noticed?—everybody surfs now. Decadent young parasites are probably carving artful S-turns in windblown dribble off Odessa as we speak.

—WILLIAM FINNEGAN



"Mumford! I thought you were killed instantly."

between 1939 and 1950, and had failed every time. In 1950, he missed by a mere three hundred feet: he had raised his arms to shield his eyes from the sun as he gazed in disbelief at the nearby shore. The pilot presumed he had given up and bent down to pull him out of the sea. Fahmy was disqualified. (His various attempts made headline news in Cairo, and influenced a great period of Egyptian swimming which followed the Second World War and culminated with Abo-Heif, a suave and brave Old Etonian, and one of the world's strongest swimmers.)

Fahmy inspired Cox to achieve what he hadn't. He described Dover and Folkestone, and told her where to train and how to find a pilot. Her training was much more intense than his had ever been—to increase her speed, she adopted methods used by Olympic swimmers—but he emphasized the discipline required to swim in cold water.

In the summer, Cox travelled to England with her mother. Throughout her swim, she felt that she had the record within her grasp, but two miles off Cape Gris-Nez she was forced sidewise, and a gap of five miles opened up between her and the shore. The currents a mile or so off the peninsula are terribly strong, and she had heard numerous stories of swimmers who got within a mile of the French coast and just couldn't get ashore. They got pulled back into the middle of the Channel, or were swept up toward Calais, or simply gave up.

She spotted a rocky promontory and decided to sprint for that, even though her pilot said that the rocks looked too dangerous and advised her to go for the beach. Her decision was crucial: she made it to the rocks, and her time of nine hours and fifty-seven minutes broke the men's record by thirty minutes and the women's by almost four hours. Telegrams of congratulations followed from all over the world, a few including offers of marriage. Some months later, her record was broken. Cox went back the following year to break the new record: she wanted to prove that her first swim hadn't been a fluke. Stronger currents forced her to swim three miles farther, through rougher seas, and still she broke the record by ten minutes.

On her return to America, Fahmy encouraged her to look for further challenges. She was invited to Cairo to compete in an annual twenty-mile race through the Nile. Fahmy assured her that it would be clean, but years away from Egypt had blunted his memory of local conditions. Cox struggled through fifteen miles of sewage, rats, and dead dogs before she was forced to retire. Fahmy also persuaded her to reattempt the Catalina record after she lost her nerve.

Now aged ninety, the diminutive, dignified Fahmy lives across the road from the Pacific in a Long Beach apartment whose sliding doors open on to a pool. He still swims daily. The author of the recent "Beauty of Being: Psychological Tips for Holistic Wellness," he has continued to act as a mentor to Cox over the years. "More than anything," she told me, "he taught me to experience the spirituality of water: how we feel embraced and freed and connected to something much larger than ourselves when we are swimming through it."

Whenever I met Cox after our first swim, I noticed that she always veered toward a table by a fountain or a pool. When it rains, she told me, she opens her windows wide, and when it rains hard she drives down to the ocean to swim. To the amazement of her neighbors, she washes her car in her swimsuit in the rain. One night while we were talking, she looked up at the stars and exclaimed how excited she was by the thought of the frozen lakes of Europa.

IN 1975, Cox flew to New Zealand for an attempt on the sixteen-mile Cook Strait, between the country's North and South Island. This would prove to be one of her most arduous swims. Caught on a massive swell caused by conflicting currents, she found herself farther from the finish after five hours than when she started, but the sight of dolphins spinning and leaping renewed her spirits. The whole of New Zealand seemed to be following the swim. "The escort turned up the radio so that I could hear messages of public support," she recalls. "A cross-channel ferry diverted its course and spectators lined the sides to cheer. Airlines altered their flight paths to fly low over the Strait. When I was halfway across, the Prime Minister called to say that the New Zealand people were behind me." After she touched the rocks at South Island, church bells were rung throughout the country to celebrate.

That swim was the turning point of her career. She felt that she had affected and somehow even inspired a whole nation. For the first time, she became aware of the transcendent power of the solo swimmer. Breaking records no longer interested her: from now on, her swims would be used as vehicles for a more personal goal. She believed that the lone swimmer among the waves, pitting her courage against great odds, could become a symbolic figure. "My goal is not just to be a great swimmer," she told me. "I think people identify with the athletic struggle, and I am trying to use sports to help bring people together." The ancient Greeks felt the same way—wars between city-states were put off during the Olympic games, as if people believed that, through the spirit and example of athletic contest, individual differences might somehow be sublimated and reconciled.

"Lynne was always interested in impossible things done in history by individual people," her history teacher at Los Alamitos High School recalls. And there is something of Joan of Arc about Cox—the enthusiasm and the innocence, the nerve, the vulnerability, the self-belief, the courage to go to people at the highest official levels and make them sympathetic to her cause.

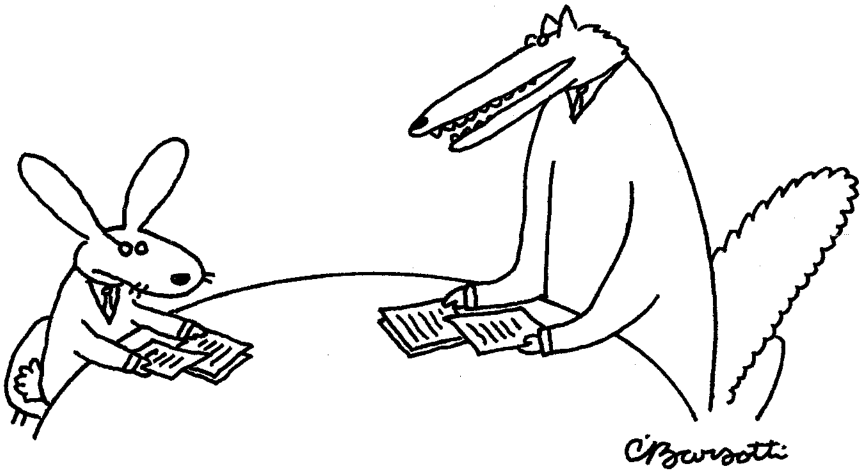
Preparations for a swim are often more torturous than the swim itself, but it is in the course of these negotiations, she believes, that differences between countries are somehow made to look trivial. A year after she swam the Bering Strait, she travelled to Lake Baikal. She arrived in Russia to find herself a celebrity. Thousands of people lined the shore, throwing long-stemmed roses as she passed, crying out, in English, "Welcome, Lynne Cox, welcome, U.S.A.!" A cape on the lake was named after her, next to Cape Tolstoy.

Cox continued to search out political challenges. In June, 1990, she swam down the River Spree between East and West Berlin, escorted by East German guards in boats, who could negotiate the various mines and razors they had placed below the surface. Later that year, aware of border disputes between Argentina and Chile, she flew down to the Beagle Channel. Her aim was to somehow break the deadlock by involving the two navies in her swim, across seven miles of fierce currents. At first, the Argentinians and the Chileans refused to coöperate with each other, but ultimately Cox prevailed, and both countries provided escort boats. Afterward, she was told by the American Ambassador to Chile that her swim had set a precedent. A year later, representatives of Argentina and Chile met on an oil rig in the Straits of Magellan to settle the disputes. And in 1994, while Jordan was mediating the peace process between Palestinians and Israelis, Cox swam across the Gulf of Aqaba, a narrow slip of water at the Red Sea's northern tip, which is bordered by Israel, Egypt, and Jordan. The talks, which were taking place at a nearby hotel, stopped while the politicians walked to the edge of the sea to witness the end of the swim.

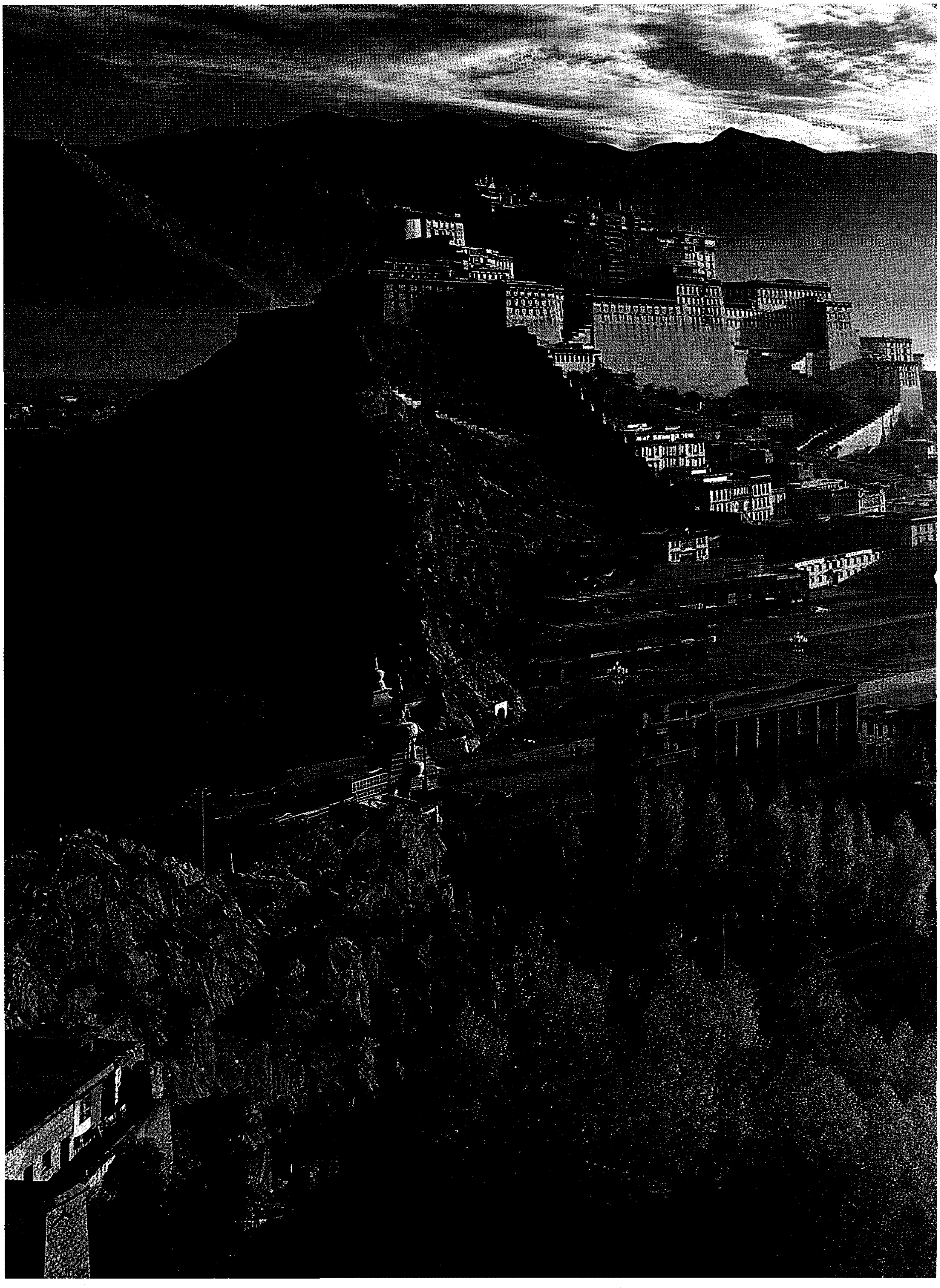
It is difficult to know if her "political" swims have affected the course of history, but as she described them I was often reminded of the hero of John Cheever's short story "The Swimmer," who swims home one summer day across the pools of his neighbors. I began to visualize his swims as a microcosm of hers. He moves from pool to pool, just as she travels from sea to sea, and his influence is that of some mythical figure at first awakening in those around him a sense of something missing in their lives, a certain generosity and vitality of spirit. He imagines his swims as a romantic voyage into unknown waters, a form of knightly quest. He believes himself "a pilgrim, an explorer, a man with a destiny." As he erupts onto his neighbors' lawns and plunges unbidden into their pools, their reaction is one of puzzled amazement.

Cox's life has been a form of knightly quest, and her spirit has remained essentially romantic—she has swum in the classical Mediterranean, between the pillars of Hercules, across the three-mile Strait of Messina, guarded in legend by Scylla and Charybdis. She has swum in the Orient, through the ancient bridges of Kunming Lake, below the old summer palace of the Emperor of China. She is drawn, she says, to dangerous places that intimidate ships, and to straits like Cook and Magellan, because they are named after sea captains who opened up a new world.

We had a final swim off Malibu, the day before I left California. Once again, we were the only people in the water. Cox warned me to avoid possible stingrays on the sand in the shallows, and never to wear a yellow bathing suit, because it is the color most attractive to sharks—"Yummy yellow they call it." She had just returned from Fiji and talked about the forty-to-fifty-foot sharks that locals had claimed to spot off the reefs there. She knew which species of shark twisted over to bite, and which didn't. I continued to wonder how, with all her acute awareness of the threat of the submarine world, she felt free to swim far out beyond the horizon. Then I thought of a passage in the autobiography of Annette Kellerman, the great Australian swimmer at the beginning of the century, that might well refer to Lynne Cox: "I learn much from people in the way they meet the unknown of life, and water is a great test. If they've come to it bravely they've gone far along the best way. I am sure no adventurer nor discoverer ever lived who could not swim. Swimming cultivates imagination; the man with the most is he who can swim his solitary course night or day and forget a black earth full of people that push. This love of the unknown is the greatest of all the joys which swimming has for me." ♦



"Page two, paragraph six: The moral high ground—we're prepared to yield totally on that point."



ROB HOWARD

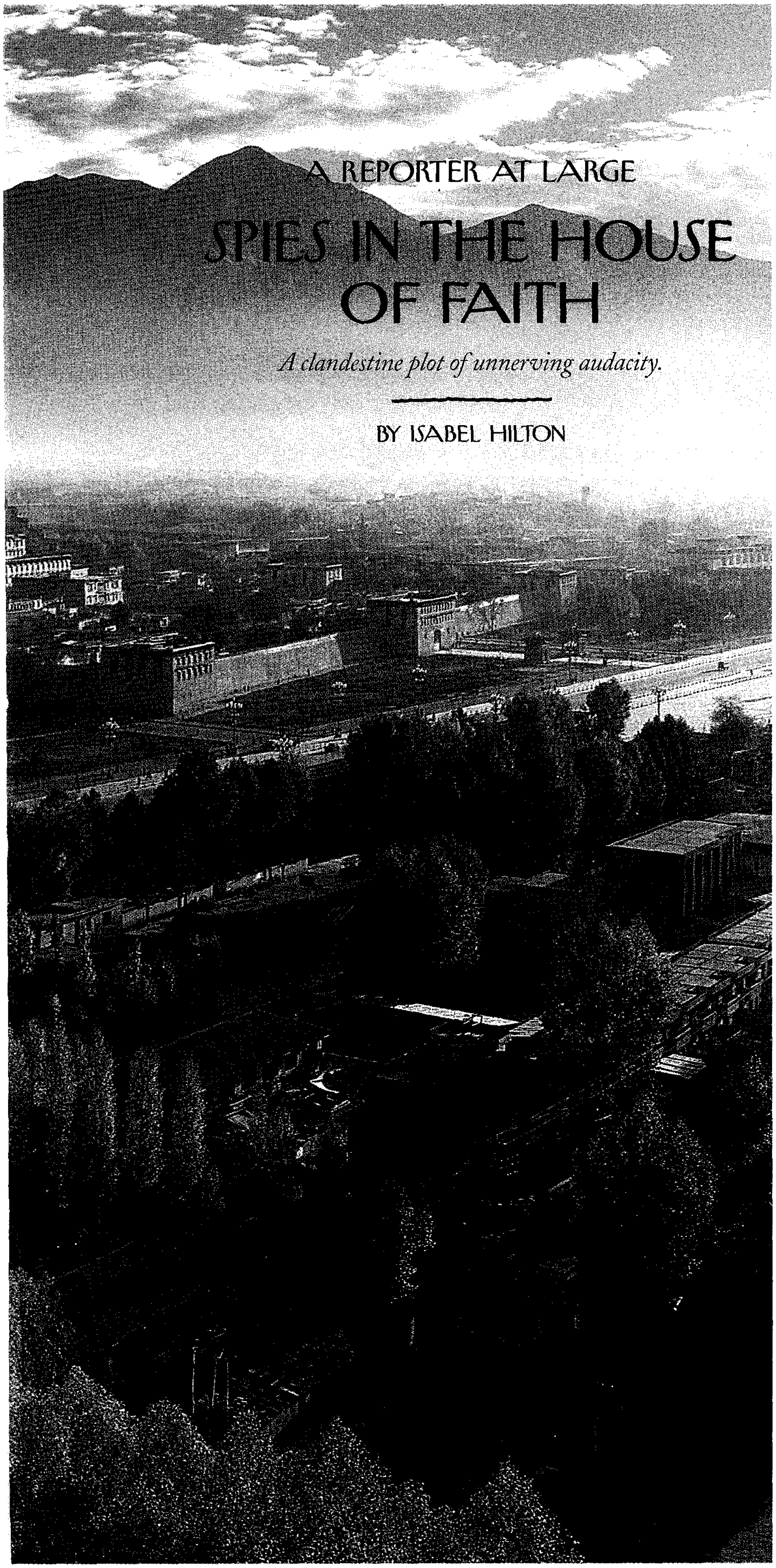
The Potala, the former residence of the Dalai Lamas, in Tibet. "I am very worried about the Chinese reaction when they discover

A REPORTER AT LARGE

SPIES IN THE HOUSE OF FAITH

A clandestine plot of unnerving audacity.

BY ISABEL HILTON



that there has been—shall we say?—a subterfuge," the Dalai Lama told the author.

CHOEKYI GYALTSEN died, unexpectedly, on a freezing night in the Tibetan monastery of Tashilhunpo in January, 1989. Better known as the tenth incarnation of the Panchen Lama, he was the reigning religious authority in Tibet—the second most important figure after the Dalai Lama, who was living in exile. The Panchen Lama had been assumed dead once before—during long years of imprisonment in China—but that time he had returned; this second death, at the age of fifty, seemed all the more cruel to his followers, because it dashed the hopes he had revived.

The event did not go entirely unnoticed in the West. In London, I watched a ninety-second report on the TV news. And there were judiciously critical obituaries, which recalled how the Panchen Lama had remained in Tibet when the Dalai Lama fled to India, thirty years earlier. The obituaries told of the Panchen's early collaboration with the Chinese occupiers of Tibet, and then of his official disgrace, in 1964, his thirteen years of detention spanning the Cultural Revolution, and his return, in the final decade of his life, as a public figure and occasional critic of the regime.

For me, at the time, it was just another landmark in the passing of old Tibet. Most Westerners had never heard of the Panchen Lama, and I knew only the sketchy details of his life that I had heard during my student days in China in the early seventies. I had no idea that his death was to become an issue that would convulse the Tibetan and the Chinese worlds, or that I would be drawn so deeply into the drama of it. The process began, for me, five years later, the first time I met the Dalai Lama.

IN February of 1994, I made the first of what were to be many journeys to Dharamsala, in northern India, to interview the Dalai Lama for the BBC. I was making a film about Petra Kelly—the radical co-founder of the German Green Party, who had been killed by her lover a couple of years before, and who had known the Dalai Lama. The film's director, Jonathan Lewis, and I arrived in Delhi on a chilly Wednesday morning, then waited for the night train to the small city of Pathankot. From there, we took a taxi for four and a half hours, winding north along deep river valleys into the foothills of the Himalayas.

It was my first encounter with Tibet-in-exile. As the taxi climbed the vertiginous, twisting roads, India seemed to fall away. The Indian men, women, and children who had thronged the streets for most of the journey gave way to flocks of young Tibetan monks in maroon robes, old men in *chubas*, and old women in long skirts and striped aprons, walking slowly and counting their rosaries. On a rock at a bend in the road, "Free Tibet" had been painted in English and in Tibetan. The muddy streets of McLeod Ganj, the mountain village that is the commercial heart of the exiled Tibetan community, were lined with shops selling Tibetan trinkets, books, and religious paintings. Among the crowds on the streets were groups of drifting foreigners: backpackers, tourists, and the occasional shaven-headed Western Buddhist monks and nuns. From the balcony of my hotel I could see the brilliant winter sunshine reflected from the golden roofs of the compound that housed the main temple. Farther up the hill lay the Dalai Lama's residence, a modest building set in a luxuriant garden.

The Dalai Lama's life in exile, I discovered, is a curious mélange of archaic court ritual, modern security, and impoverished informality. His predecessors—the theocratic kings and incarnations of the Buddha of Compassion who had governed Tibet since the seventeenth century—commanded the respect of most of Central Asia. But this Dalai Lama has been forced into a new kind of international celebrity. Banished from his country, he uses his personal charisma and his moral authority to keep Tibet's cause alive. In India, he and his followers have re-created what they could of their former culture. There are monasteries, an elected government, a library, and schools that offer education in English and in Tibetan. It appears at first glance to be a success, a tribute to human resilience. But it is a fragile success that depends, to a degree that worries many, on the Dalai Lama himself.

Two days after our arrival, Jonathan and I waited in the long, low bungalow that houses his audience room. The Dalai Lama appeared, walking briskly.

"You must be the BBC," he said.

"And you must be the Dalai Lama," Jonathan replied.

The Dalai Lama laughed as though it were the funniest thing he had ever heard. "Yes," he said. "Yes, I am the Dalai Lama," and launched into another storm of chuckles.

There are those in his community who believe that the Dalai Lama's famous laugh is his best weapon. "Be careful," I had been warned by one Tibetan intellectual. "He uses that laugh when he doesn't want to say anything." It is certainly an unanswerable laugh. His shoulders heave, his head goes back, and he rocks in his chair until it passes. It is a great full stop of a laugh, putting an end to any further pursuit of a line of inquiry and deflecting impertinence or hostility. But there is one matter about which he rarely laughs: the Chinese occupation of Tibet.

ZEST FOR LIFE

"Ah! Here it is!"

After the interview, we said goodbye, neither of us expecting to see the Dalai Lama again. That evening, we dined with an expatriate Englishwoman at the Hotel Tibet. At a neighboring table, three Tibetans listened politely as an American lectured them on the finer points of Buddhism. In the bar, a less spiritual group could be heard warming up on the hotel's brightly colored cocktails. Our own conversation turned to the Tibetan religious system, and I asked our companion about the fate of the tenth Panchen Lama.

"He died," she reminded me, "in 1989."

"And his reincarnation?" I asked. Buddhists believe that death is a passage to another life. For Tibetan Buddhists, the Panchen Lamas are incarnations of the Buddha of Boundless Light, an enlightened being who returns to human life to help others. The Panchen Lama's absence was only a temporary affair, and it was the duty of his followers to find the next incarnation—the child who would be recognized as the eleventh Panchen Lama.

"He hasn't been found yet," she said. I was immediately filled with curiosity. Who was looking for the reincarnation? Were the Chinese interested? She answered as best she could: yes, it was an important issue and, yes, by now, under normal circumstances, the child should have been found. Everyone was concerned, but whatever was happening was happening in secret. It was one of the key problems facing the Dalai Lama's government-in-exile.

I stayed on for a few days and asked everyone I met about the Panchen Lama. I had little knowledge of the structures and beliefs of Tibetan Buddhism, or even what precisely was meant by reincarnation. I spoke no Tibetan and found the names so hard to grasp that I had to write them down, laboriously, before they slipped away. I was anxious to speak with the Dalai Lama about the search for the new incarnation, but didn't know whether he'd agree to discuss the issue with an outsider. I mentioned the idea to Tsering Tashi, an assistant in the Dalai Lama's private office. Tashi was encouraging. It was an important story, he said, and should be told. On the last day of my visit, I left a letter for the Dalai Lama, asking whether he would be willing to coöperate with a documentary about the search. Then I took the winding road back down from Dharamsala to the dust and noise of India.

OPEN
Victoria Roberts

"You were ferocious when you rushed to get us those seats on the Jitney."

ON January 27, 1989, the night before the tenth Panchen Lama died, he had been on a visit from Beijing to his former home, Tashilhunpo Monastery, in Shigatse, in central Tibet. Thirty-nine years had passed since China invaded and occupied Tibet. Nine years after that, in 1959, the Tibetans had risen up in protest, but the rebellion was brutally crushed by the Chinese in a matter of days. That was when the Dalai Lama, Tibet's secular ruler as well as its highest spiritual incarnation, had fled to India. Over the next few months, a hundred thousand Tibetans had followed him. The Panchen Lama stayed behind and was briefly considered a puppet of the Chinese regime. In the early sixties, however, when he asked the government to moderate its policies in Tibet, he lost official favor and was bound and paraded through the streets to be jeered at and spat upon, and then thrown into prison. Since his release, in 1977, the Chinese government had not allowed him to live in Tibet, and his visits there were rare.

Toward midnight on the evening of the twenty-seventh, after a day of festivities, the Panchen Lama grew tired and retired to his room. He asked an attendant to bring him an extra blanket against the cold. When the attendant returned, however, he found his way blocked by an unusual number of Chinese security personnel. They snatched the blanket from him and told him to leave. To his alarm, he recognized none of them. Accounts of what happened next are murky and contradictory. According to Xinhua, the official government press agency, at about 4 A.M. on the twenty-eighth, the Panchen Lama felt a chest pain and called a doctor; he was given some medication, after which he slept again. He woke again at eight-thirty, and the medical staff checked his heart. Five minutes later, he collapsed and died.

The suspicion that he had been murdered spread like a blaze in a dry pine forest. A case could be made, of course, for natural causes. The Panchen Lama was a huge man, who gloried in his bulk. There had been a biting wind that day and the ceremonies had been long. But those who sought a motive for murder pointed to the outspoken views that the Panchen Lama had begun to express. They recalled a speech he had given five days before, at a high-level meeting between government and religious leaders, during which he had revealed his real feelings about the Chinese occupation of Tibet. "Since liberation," he had said, "there has certainly been development, but the price paid for this development has been greater than the gains."

Whatever the cause, the death of the religious leader devastated the monks of Tashilhunpo. Sonam Gyelpo, a monk now in exile in India, remembers it as the beginning of the end of his life in Tibet. "People just couldn't believe it at first," he told me. "The monks were beating their heads against the walls so hard that the walls were stained with blood. They were crying that there was no point in staying in the monastery any longer."

Posters went up, demanding that the Chinese authorities prove that they had not murdered the Panchen Lama. The Tibetan New Year, which had become a time of tension and protest, was approaching. On March 5th, members of the People's Armed Police opened fire on a crowd in Lhasa, sparking a full-scale riot. At least twelve Tibetans were killed. Two days later, martial law was declared.

In this tense atmosphere, the significance of the death of the Panchen Lama—a man who, in his last ten years, had tried to mediate between his restive compatriots and the Beijing authorities—was inescapable. But more important was a question that his death had raised: Who would control the search for his reincarnation? The Chinese? The Tibetans? Or their exiled leader, the Dalai Lama?

THIS was the story I wanted to follow. The Dalai Lama did not respond to the letter I'd left with his office in February, 1994, so I telephoned. I wrote another letter. I E-mailed his office. Finally, in July, I heard back. The Dalai Lama would speak with me about the search for the eleventh Panchen Lama and would allow me special access to follow its progress, but, whatever happened during the search, my discretion was required until it was concluded. (I have changed certain details in this article to protect those involved who are still living in Tibet or China.)

In October, I returned to Dharamsala. As I waited in the Dalai Lama's audience room, I had many questions. Somewhere in the world, a boy had been born, and for the Tibetans only that boy would do. How did they know how to find him? How did they know who he was? The process was a mystery to me. There were certain things the Tibetans looked for, but the authenticity of the child depended ultimately, I thought, on the power of their belief. I was not looking for a religion, but I wanted to understand that power.

And I wanted to understand how that belief would express itself, given the repressive restrictions the Chinese had placed on it. Tradition ruled that the Dalai Lamas and the Panchen Lamas would play the decisive role in the recognition of each other's incarnations. But this was the new Tibet, a Tibet under the rule of the Chinese Communist Party. For two decades after the 1959 rebellion, the Chinese had tried to eradicate religion in Tibet. Thousands of believers had been imprisoned, and ninety-nine per cent of the country's religious buildings destroyed. But the campaign, in the end, had done little to help the Chinese cause; it had simply strengthened Tibetan nationalism. Since 1979, the Chinese had been trying, instead, to coöpt Buddhism, to make it work for them by controlling it. Would they allow the Dalai Lama to participate in this important religious event?

The Dalai Lama appeared, moving quickly and energetically, and settled into an armchair opposite me. His face assumed that air of expectancy—just short of impatience—which signalled that a moment of high seriousness had arrived. "This," he said, leaning forward to emphasize his words, "is a spiritual matter."

In old Tibet, he told me, the search for the Panchen Lama's reincarnations was initially conducted by the lamas of his monastery, Tashilhunpo. Only in the final stages did it involve such a senior figure as the Dalai Lama. Back in August, 1989, Beijing had overseen the formation of an official search committee at Tashilhunpo (which some of the monks suspected was infiltrated by Chinese spies), but so far had allowed only one contact, an indirect one, between the Dalai Lama and the monastery's administrator, Chadrel Rinpoche. In 1993, Chadrel had sent a letter through the Dalai Lama's brother, and the Dalai Lama had replied immediately, inviting Chadrel to come to India to discuss the search. But after that there had been nothing. All formal requests from the Dalai Lama to send representatives to Tibet to take part in the search had been ignored by Beijing.

In the meantime, the Dalai Lama had initiated investigations of his own. From all over the Tibetan world, he told me, names had come, some sent by hopeful parents, others by lamas who had been alerted to look out for unusual children born at the right time.

What was it, I asked him, that qualified these boys to be considered candidates?

The Dalai Lama smiled and began to enumerate the signs. "There is a boy from Gyalthang," he said. "Whilst this child was still in the mother's womb, he recited a mantra. The mother heard it. Then, on the day the child was going to be born, he spoke from inside the womb, and said, 'I am going to be born today'—exactly as it happened." He laughed. "Talking before birth—and immediately afterward. Curious," he said, shaking his head.

Moments before, we had been analyzing politics. Now we were discussing a talking fetus. I looked at the Dalai Lama, hoping for some clue to how I was meant to take this. He was a sophisticated man and very aware of the power of the media. But I could find no trace of irony in his expression. I was reminded of a conversation I'd had a few days earlier with a young Tibetan monk in southern India. When I'd asked whether any of his fellow-monks had known the late Panchen Lama, he told me that he himself had.

"I was with him in prison," he said. "I told them to beat me."

"What happened then?" I asked.

"I died," he replied.

"I see," I said, my mind reeling. "Do you remember that?"

He grinned. "No. It was in 1962. Maybe 1963. That was in my previous incarnation. Have you heard of Tina Turner?"

"Then, there is another child, in Amdo," the Dalai Lama continued, "who also seems to be very bright. In both cases, the previous Panchen Lama had a special connection with the families. That is generally taken as a clear indication. Then, there's a child that local ladies say has declared himself to be the Panchen Lama's reincarnation. You see, there is competition," he said, laughing, "particularly among the local ladies. And there is another one, in Dharamsala. The father is a lama inside Tibet, who had some close connection with the Panchen Lama. The mother escaped while she was pregnant. I saw her with the baby. That baby was very small, but he looked at me and smiled"—the Dalai Lama beamed at the memory—"very beautifully." He added, "Frankly speaking, at the moment my mind is in a state of confusion and indecision. You see, in my case Lhamo Latso Lake gave a clear indication: it showed the house where I was born."

Lhamo Latso is a holy lake, in central Tibet, and is one of the first ports of call for any search party looking for a reincarnation. On the surface of its waters visions appear to those who can see them. Tashilhunpo had sent a party to the lake in 1989, at the start of the search for the Panchen Lama, and there had been, the Dalai Lama told me, several visions, among them a vision of a house guarded by what might have been a Sikh policeman; it was thought to be a sign that the new Panchen Lama had been born in India. But since then the claims of the boys from Tibet had been put forward, and the evidence in their favor seemed equally plausible.

Cut off from the search, the Dalai Lama knew that his picture was incomplete. Dharamsala had telephones and fax machines, even E-mail, but the telephone lines were often down for days at a time. The Tibetan phones were assumed to be tapped, and any communication into China was likely to be monitored by both the Chinese and the Indians. The Indian government had been generally hospitable to its population of exiled Tibetans, but their presence posed a complicated political problem, and India had no desire to annoy its powerful neighbor.

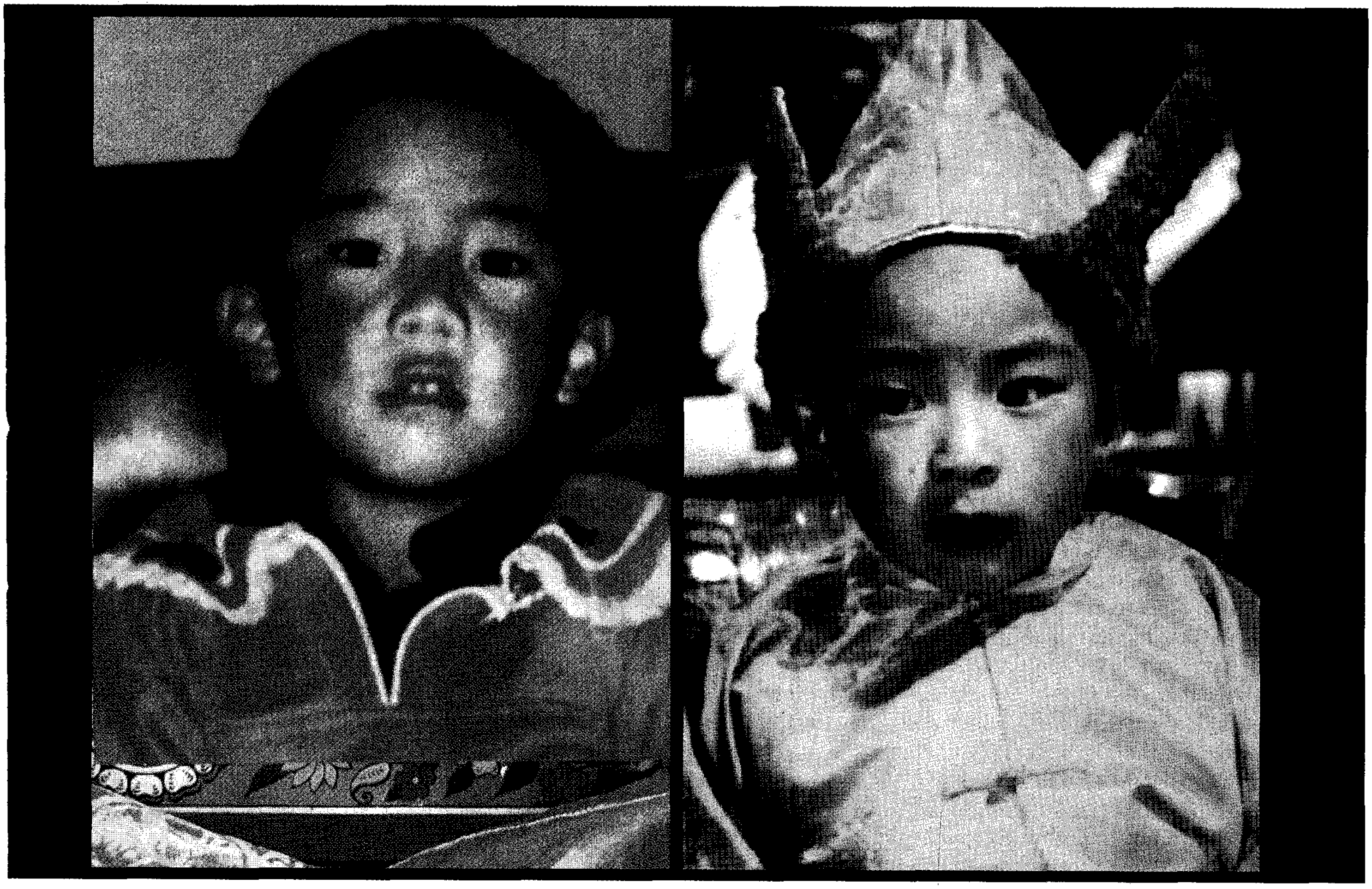
Still, it was clear that in this world of religious allegiances the Himalayas were at least partly porous. Messages were carried across the Tibetan-Indian border by hand. Secrets were exchanged, clandestine arrangements attempted. The Dalai Lama had recently sent a covert message to Tashilhunpo Monastery, for example, asking the search committee to return to the lake to confirm its visions.

Had the Chinese communicated with him about the search? I asked.

In the beginning, he explained, Beijing had declared that the Panchen Lama's reincarnation would be found within China and had indicated that the Dalai Lama could not be involved. But he had recently received a different message from the Chinese authorities. "It said that they will announce the new Panchen Lama very soon," the Dalai Lama told me. "They were inquiring as to my response. This is a little illogical, a little delicate. They want me to say yes." He chuckled. "I don't think I will say yes. What do you think? Yes or no? I think no, don't you?" His voice trailed off into a gale of laughter.

I left, with the sound of the Dalai Lama's merriment still in my ears. It was clear that the search had reached a critical stage. The Dalai Lama was anxious to be involved, and Beijing was determined to exclude him. The Chinese wanted the process concluded, and the Tibetans were trying to delay. Over the next year and a half, it would become an intricate battle between the power of the Chinese state and the resilience of Tibetan religious faith.

The following January, the Dalai Lama would give a *Kalachakra* initiation—one of the most important teachings in Buddhism—in the south of India. Thousands of people would attend, and among them, he hoped, would be one of the senior lamas involved in the search. Once he had had the opportunity to consult with that lama, he planned to send his own search parties into Tibet to test the candidates. If the Chinese coöperated, the search parties could travel openly. If not, they would proceed clandestinely. That, the Dalai Lama observed mildly, would be more complicated. But it had been done before: a monk the Dalai Lama had sent to search for a lower incarnation had succeeded in finding the child and had smuggled him to India in 1993. The Dalai Lama had said that it might be possible for me to accompany the search party, and I returned to London to wait for word.


Left, the boy now known as "the world's youngest political prisoner"; and Beijing's Panchen Lama, Gyaltsen Norbu.

LEFT: NETWORK/SABA; RIGHT: CHINE NOUVELLE/SIPA

IT came nearly three months later, one night in January. My telephone rang at 2 A.M. On a terrible line I made out the familiar voice of Tsering Tashi, from the Dalai Lama's office in Dharamsala. "You have to come to India immediately," he said. Why? I asked. He didn't know. "His Holiness is in the south and has sent a message asking us to tell you to come right away."

Part of the difficulty of following this story was that, given the secrecy of the affair, I could never just call the Dalai Lama for something I'd forgotten to ask in person. To get an answer to a simple question, I had to travel three thousand miles. So it occurred to me that the latest development might be something quite minor. But there was no doubt in my mind that I would go.

Four days later, with visa and tickets arranged in record time, I flew to Delhi,

RETIREMENT TRAINING PROGRAM
19
BAKING SPICES
10
CEREAL SNACKS JUICE

"Very good, Larry! Just one more step and you'll have the entire aisle blocked!"

• •

then headed north to Jammu and took a taxi across Kashmir. The journey to Dharamsala is so preposterously inconvenient that some have come to suspect that the Tibetan refugee community was put there by the Indian government under pressure from the Chinese—in the hope that Dharamsala's inaccessibility would slow down the flow of visitors attracted by the Dalai Lama. But the truth is that one of the Dalai Lama's advisers had chosen it for the beauty of the scenery and the purity of the water.

There was the usual parade on the road: slow-moving water buffalo, gaunt cattle, an occasional moth-eaten camel, a troop of monkeys. As the car crawled up the final ascent to McLeod Ganj, it broke down. I got out and stretched. The late-afternoon sun was painting the valley a mellow gold. I picked up my bag and strolled along a path to a small hotel that lay in the woodland shadows.

The next morning, after the briefest of greetings, the Dalai Lama came directly to the point. He had just returned from southern India. There, during the *Kalachakra* teachings, a monk had approached his assistant and said that he had an important message.

"Actually, we told him to go away and stop making a nuisance of himself," the assistant told me later. "There were thousands of people who wanted to see His Holiness. I told him at least to tell me what it was about. But he wouldn't."

Finally, the assistant relented. The monk, it turned out, had an extraordinary story to tell. He was an exile, he said, living in India, and he had just returned from a visit to Tibet. While he was there, the Tashilhunpo monks had asked him to carry a set of scriptures back to present to the Dalai Lama. It was imperative for the monk to return to India at once, he was told, and he must return via Nepal, where he would meet a messenger who had another package for the Dalai Lama. In a state of agitation, the monk travelled to the border crossing at Nepal. There he was joined by the messenger, who accompanied him all the way to Delhi and then gave him a package. It was this package that the monk had brought south. The messenger stayed in Delhi. He could not be seen anywhere near the Dalai Lama, he insisted.

The Dalai Lama opened the package and discovered that it contained a complete list of the boys whom the Tashilhunpo search committee had under consideration. There were more than twenty photographs, and a long letter from the head of the committee, Chadrel Rinpoche, explaining the evidence in each case. There was, the Dalai Lama read, a candidate whom Chadrel favored. A highly respected Tashilhunpo lama, who had taken part in the visit to Lhamo Latso, had interviewed the boy and was convinced that he was the one. But the final choice, Chadrel wrote, was to be the Dalai Lama's.

Chadrel Rinpoche was a reincarnate lama himself, of a minor lineage. He had no great reputation as a scholar, but he was a good manager, and his monks respected him for his honesty and fair-mindedness. He understood, however, that any religious freedom he had depended on the continuing favor of the Chinese, and so far he had played along with them. He had been rewarded with a house and a large salary. But he was now faced with a difficult decision: He and the search committee had delayed the conclusion of the search for the Panchen Lama for almost six years, hoping that there would be some way to include the Dalai Lama, but they could not keep it going much longer. The Chinese were insisting that the final authority over the search lay with them. If Chadrel conceded to Beijing's demands, his career would continue on its upward path. But without the Dalai Lama's recognition the child—and Chadrel—would earn the contempt of Tibet's monks. And there was also, of course, his religious conscience.

Chadrel began what was to be the most dangerous game of his life. He proposed a subterfuge: The Dalai Lama would recognize the child now, but the child's name and the fact that the Dalai Lama had identified the boy would remain a secret. Once Chadrel had the name, he would take the search through its closing stages, insuring that the Dalai Lama's candidate emerged as the choice of the committee. The child would be presented to the Chinese, approved, proclaimed, and installed in Tashilhunpo Monastery, all without a sign from Dharamsala. Only when Chinese approval had been given would the Dalai Lama make it public that the boy had been his choice all along. If it worked, Chadrel argued, everybody would gain, and, however angry the Chinese might be over the deception, it would be too late for them to do anything. But if any hint of the plan were to leak out prematurely, Chadrel warned, they would be sure to reject the Dalai Lama's candidate and impose their own.

Not without reservations, the Dalai Lama told me, he had consented. Chadrel, he assumed, was a better judge of the internal politics than he was, and the Dalai Lama felt that he had little choice but to try to make the plan work.

I was beginning to understand why my telephone had rung in the middle of the night. The Dalai Lama needed an outside witness: it was important to him that there should be no confusion among Tibetans about who had made the real choice, and when. It would be better still, he explained, if the witness were a Western journalist who could film the process.

I was astonished by the speed of events and the proposition that was unfolding. I had hoped at some point to join a search party. Now the child was about to be chosen, and I would be recording the result. Suddenly, I was intimately involved in an extraordinary story that I could reveal to no one.

The Dalai Lama had, he said, conducted a divination. It had told him that it was time to decide. In two days, the monk would reach Dharamsala. The Dalai Lama would then perform further divinations and complete the process of recognition. A reënactment of the monk's arrival (the Dalai Lama called it "playacting"), the written proclamation of the recognition, the dispatch of the letter back to Tibet—all was to be filmed and dated, so that when the moment came there would be no question of the authenticity of the choice.

We talked on, discussing the risks involved. The biggest risk—and the one that preoccupied the Dalai Lama the most—was to Chadrel Rinpoche.

"I am very worried," he said, "about the Chinese reaction when they discover that there has been—shall we say?—a subterfuge. They are bound to be angry. Chadrel Rinpoche says that he is prepared to risk his life. But this is a matter of great concern."

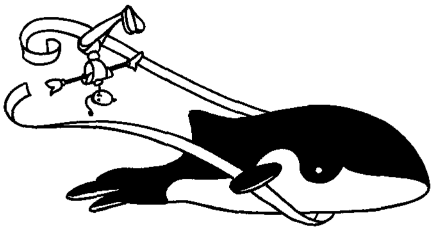
I had a more mundane concern. Since I had known nothing of these dramatic developments when I left London, I had neither a film crew nor a camera. I was halfway up a mountain in northern India, and the monk was due in Dharamsala in two days. I ran through the options with Tashi. There were film crews in Delhi, but there was no means of guaranteeing their discretion. Then Tashi remembered two visitors who had preceded me that morning into the audience chamber—a Finnish film crew.

Over lunch at the Hotel Tibet, I asked the Finnish filmmakers why they were in India. They were making a religious film, they said. Both were Buddhists, and the highlight of their trip had been their audience with the Dalai Lama. They were planning to leave Dharamsala the next day.

I could not explain why, I told them, but if they could stay another couple of days and were prepared to promise not to reveal what they saw they would have several opportunities to meet the Dalai Lama again. I was aware of how strange it must have sounded, but they took it solemnly, asking only for my assurance that nothing dishonorable would be expected of them.

Two days later, on January 26th, we met in the gatehouse of the palace. The Dalai Lama was cheerful as the morning's work got under way. We filmed the reënactment of the arrival of the monk—a thin middle-aged man with prominent ears—and his prostration before the Dalai Lama. From the depth of his maroon robes, the monk drew the package. The Dalai Lama opened it, and a litter of photographs of young boys spilled onto a low table in front of him. Suddenly, the process, which had been somewhat abstract, became very real. Life was about to change radically for one of these children. The Dalai Lama picked up a photograph and looked at it for several minutes.

It was my first sight of an image that was to become known around the world. In it, a child stared at the camera, his head slightly tilted back, his lips parted. He was sitting in what seemed to be one of those large brown leather armchairs that used to be the universal official furniture in China. He wore a dark-blue shirt with an orange tunic over it. His eyes, widely spaced, betrayed nothing of the emotions he might have felt as the photograph was taken. He was Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, the eleventh Panchen Lama.



The Dalai Lama spoke of the burden of trust that had lain upon him since the death of the tenth Panchen Lama. He had regularly consulted the oracles and had learned that the child had been born, he said, but until the beginning of 1994 the oracles had not told him that the moment to identify the child had come. Then Chadrel's list of names had arrived.

"I made a divination, immediately," the Dalai Lama said. "It pointed to one boy, a boy of six. When I looked at that boy's picture, I felt a warm feeling, which developed the more I looked at it. Then, yesterday, I made another divination, and the name of the boy came." The Dalai Lama had used a traditional method of divination, in which slips of paper bearing the names of the candidates were introduced into identical balls of kneaded *tsampa*—roasted barley meal. The balls were then placed in a bowl, and the bowl was rotated as the Dalai Lama prayed, until one of them jumped out. The process was repeated to confirm the result. "Now," the Dalai Lama said, beaming, "I feel relieved of a huge responsibility—one stage of the responsibility. But, because of today's situation, the next question is: How should this true reincarnation be installed and have a proper education, proper care? The problem is how to resolve this"—he laughed—"with our new masters. It's all very sensitive. So one worry is over, but another begins."

The boy came from Nagchu, a remote district in central Tibet. He had been born on April 25, 1989, in the Year of the Earth-Snake. According to Chadrel's letter, he had not figured high on the original list, but when the search parties went to visit the candidates he made a deep impression.

"This boy showed no excitement or fear," the Dalai Lama said. "He greeted the lama as though he were an old friend. And when the lama asked him where he came from, the child replied, 'I come from Tashilhunpo.' When the monk had to leave, the boy asked to go with him." There was more, he explained. The monks had found special signs on the child's body.

"What happens next?" I asked. Traditionally, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima would now have been educated for a life of prayer and devotion in Tashilhunpo Monastery, and his family raised to positions of wealth and respect. But that Tibet no longer existed. What did the future have in store for this child? Would he grow up to be a puppet of the Chinese or a patriotic Tibetan leader? Would he ever meet the Dalai Lama, his spiritual brother, who had just taken a step that would change his life forever?

"Now," the Dalai Lama said, "I wait. I have to wait for a signal from those who have taken this great risk. I am responsibile for their lives."

The next day, I said goodbye to my Finnish film crew. I wasn't sure whether they had understood what they had witnessed. In any case, they were sworn to secrecy. Then I packed the tapes and travelled to Delhi with the monk and Tsering Tashi to meet the original messenger, who was waiting to carry the Dalai Lama's answer back to Tibet. The four of us spent an emotional day together in Delhi, taking photographs and discussing the future. At the restaurant where we ate lunch, a group of people who appeared to be Tibetans sat down next to us, and a frisson ran around our table as we wondered whether they had been sent to spy on us.

At the end of the day, we said our goodbyes. I planned to follow the story into Tibet, but India was not the place to ask for a visa. It was the middle of winter, not the tourist season, and the Chinese Embassy in Delhi would have been suspicious. So I was returning to London to arrange the trip from there. Tashi and the monk were going back to Dharamsala. The messenger had the hardest journey ahead of him; he was nervous, but proud of the trust that had been placed in him. We wished each other luck. Despite their anxiety, my three companions were bright with expectation. I shared neither their nation's history nor their religion, but it was impossible not to be moved by the faith that impelled them to take such risks.

The messenger left the next day. It must have been a lonely trip. He took a bus to Kathmandu, but when he got there the weather worsened. A heavy snowfall closed the road across the mountain pass to the border. A snowfall like that could lie for weeks. The messenger knew that he could not wait. His letters were urgently needed. If he could not travel by car, then he would walk through the snow-covered mountains. It took him the best part of five days.

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IN London, I got a visa and found a cameraman to film what I thought would be the closing stages of the search: Chadrel would insure that Gedhun Choekyi Nyima was chosen by the search committee, and a party of Tashilhunpo monks would be sent to bring him to the monastery. I wanted to be there—or, at the very least, to arrange for someone less conspicuous to film it for me. Things did not, however, go as planned.

I made it to Lhasa, the capital of Tibet, two weeks later. I had flown to Chengdu, in western China—a city in the grip of the redevelopment fever that had consumed the country since Deng Xiaoping decided that getting rich lay within the new rules of Communism. My hotel, a vast and elderly building, was being ripped apart and refurbished. Half transformed, it seemed to embody the distracted condition of China itself, scrambling to discard the past in a desperate rush to modernity. In a cavernous, dusty ballroom, young prostitutes, in miniskirts and bright makeup, whiled away the afternoons, waiting for customers. Raucous groups of young men in baggy suits—the new money-making élite—occupied other tables, talking loudly into mobile phones and steadily filling ashtrays and spittoons. In the dark recesses of the hotel was the bureau of the state-run China International Travel Service, which held the key to travel to Tibet.

The manager in the C.I.T.S. office was in his thirties. He sat smoking behind a dark-brown counter that was bare except for a large Nescafé jar, now half full of wet tea leaves, which he topped up with water from a battered thermos.

"Lhasa?" he said. "No problem." He recommended a weeklong tour with limousine and two obligatory guides, to be paid for in advance. He named a price that made me think I had inquired about buying Tibet. If I agreed, I knew, a ticket would miraculously appear the next day. Otherwise, the flights might remain "full" for weeks. I declined but refused to leave. The manager rapidly lost interest. He ignored me for an hour, then, as his lunch break approached, he sighed theatrically and reached for the telephone.

"No limousine and no guides! She says she can't afford it," he shouted into the phone.

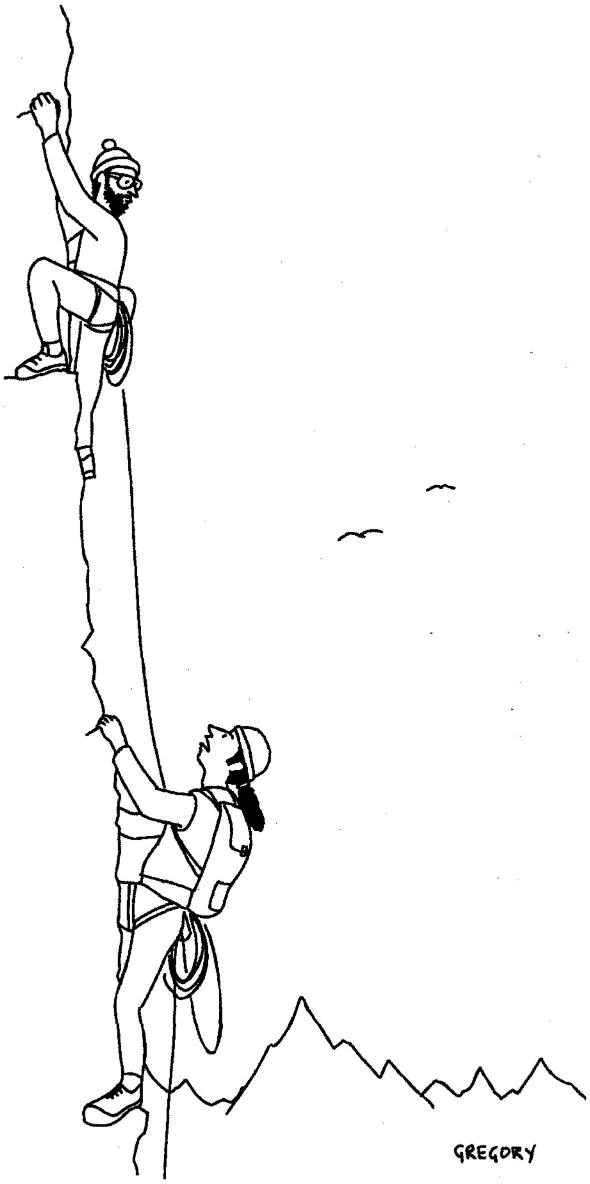
I waited for what I thought would be the inevitable refusal. But on the other end, in Lhasa, it was decided, apparently, that for that low-season week at least even an uncoöperative tourist was better than none at all. Permission was granted, and there was a flight the next day.

The next morning, and the day after, however, the airport was fogbound. Its corridors were thronged with stranded travellers, who sat staring at gray murk outside the smeared windows. As I waited, I noticed a young Chinese man with a large camera. Carefully, he slipped into a squatting position and pointed his camera at me. I raised my own camera and pointed it at him. He lowered his lens and grinned sheepishly. He was smartly dressed and had no luggage. "I work for the South West Airlines in-flight magazine," he said. "Are you going to Lhasa? What is your name?"

In twenty years of travelling in China, I had never seen an in-flight magazine. I stared at him. "I don't understand," I replied. He shrugged and retreated. Ten minutes later, out of the corner of my eye, I noticed him again, still taking my picture.

At last, on the third day, the airport reopened. An hour after the plane had taken off, the billowing banks of cloud below us were pierced by jagged snow-covered peaks—the mountains of Tibet. We disembarked into a freezing baggage hall. I walked slowly, conscious of the effort of every step in the thin air. My luggage was covered with a thick layer of what were unmistakably—and inexplicably—chicken droppings. The rickety bus I caught outside the airport took three hours to get to Lhasa, and my spirits began to sink as we reached the outskirts of the city, bowling along a wide street lined with dreary compounds of small apartment blocks and single-story karaoke bars. Was this the legendary capital of Tibet?

But then the Potala, the former palace of the Dalai Lamas, came into view. It was a heart-stopping sight. It seemed to grow from living rock, its huge bulk floating above the city, its façade alive with the fluttering of the curtains that decorate its hundreds of windows. This was architecture as theatre, an assertion of spiritual and temporal power, which still managed to impose its authority on a city it had once dominated. As I approached the Potala the next day, I saw that the little district of Shol, which had lain at its feet, was gone. In its place was a vast building site where Tibetans were working, I learned, on what was to be a huge plaza, part of a modernization plan that is clearly intended to erase the old city. When it's complete, the Potala will be marooned in a Chinese metropolis.



"I don't mean to dampen your enthusiasm, but your use of the phrase 'or die trying' is a tad unsettling."

In Lhasa, I asked a friend whether a meeting with Chadrel was possible. Things were difficult right now, he said. Chadrel was under extreme pressure from the Chinese government, and a meeting with a foreigner would be ill-advised. While I was waiting, though, there was no reason that I shouldn't visit the monastery, which was promoted by the government as a stop for Western tourists. So I found a four-wheel-drive jeep and set out for Tashilhunpo.

As I sat in the monastery courtyard in the afternoon sunshine, a group of monks called to me to join them. They poured some hot butter tea into a bowl and gave it to me. We chatted, at first about neutral subjects. Then one monk began to talk about the late Panchen Lama. He was worried, he said, about how long it was taking to find the reincarnation, but the exact procedures were secret. Chadrel,

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he said, had just left for Beijing.

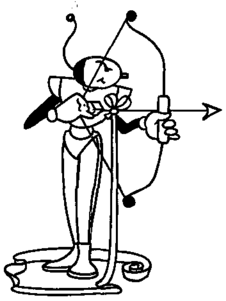
"Who should decide which child is the right incarnation?" I asked him.

"The Dalai Lama," he said firmly.

CHADREL'S departure was a surprise. But there was a limit to how long I could wait for him to return without its becoming obvious that I was not a tourist. I had no choice but to go back to London, with the understanding that another friend, a schoolteacher in China, would call me when something happened.

Months passed with no word. I called the teacher from time to time and we exchanged coded messages. "When is the new teacher expected?" I'd ask. "I don't know. The principal is still away, and I don't know when he's coming back," he'd reply. I also kept in touch with the Dalai Lama, and we arranged to meet at the beginning of May, when he was in Dortmund, Germany.

The Chinese government had been waging a particularly virulent campaign against the Dalai Lama for the previous nine months, and he was staying, with his small entourage of bodyguards and personal attendants, at the Römischer Kaiser Hotel, secure behind the doors of the presidential suite. He had discarded his usual Doc Martens for a pair of flip-flops and seemed in a decided frame of mind. The elation of our last meeting in Dharamsala had been replaced by great uneasiness. The waiting, he announced, could go on no longer. Messages he had been expecting for months had not come. He knew that Chadrel was still in Beijing, but he had been unable to contact him, and, frankly, he was worried.



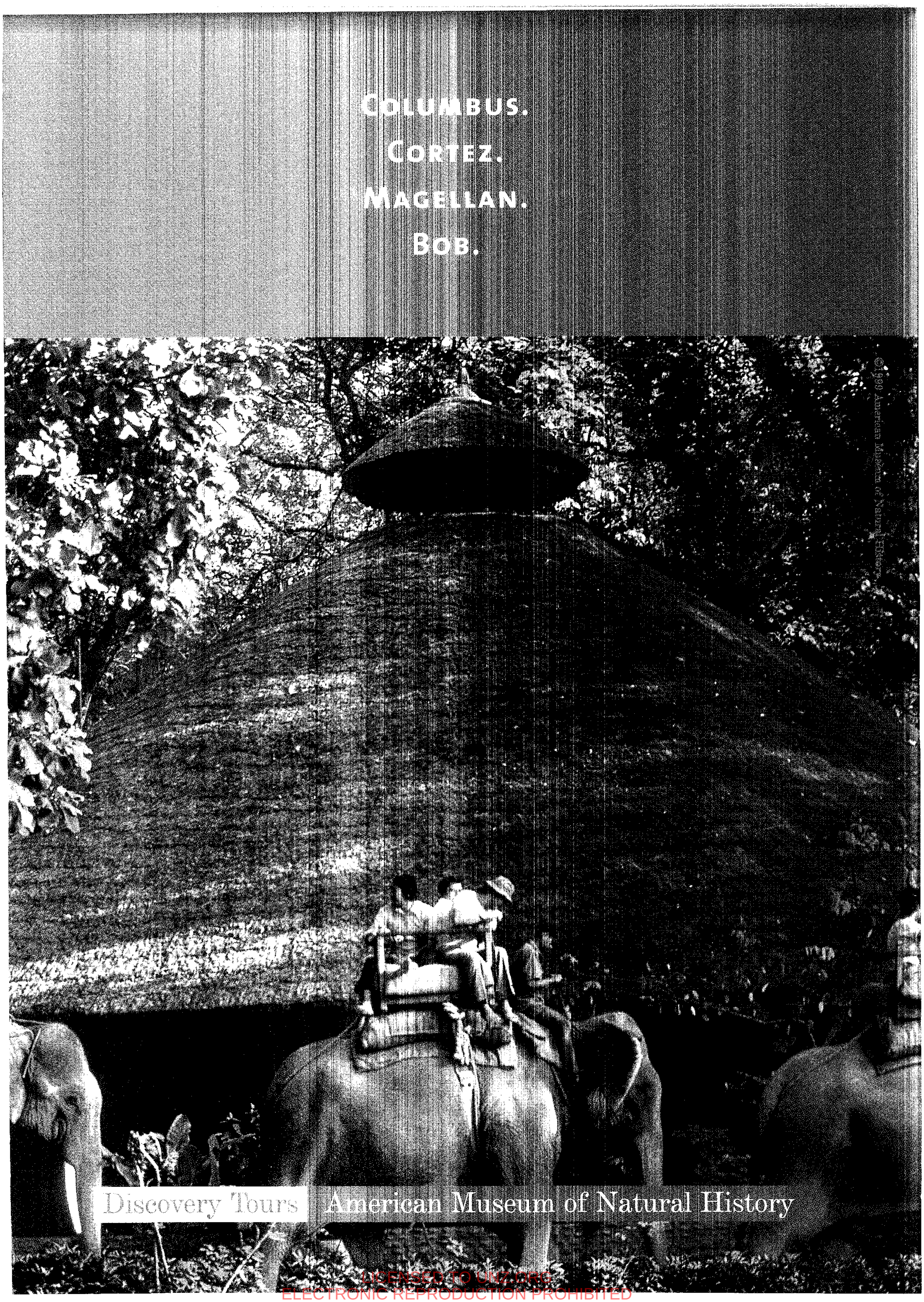
He had begun to doubt the wisdom of Chadrel's plan, he continued. He had not lost the fear that, even if it worked, it might put Chadrel's life at risk. His advisers and fellow-exiles had also raised strong objections. It would not go down well in the exile community if the Chinese proclaimed a candidate before the Dalai Lama had pronounced, they said. Could he really afford to let it be thought that he was following the Chinese lead in this critical religious moment?

"I have thought of an alternative to Chadrel's plan," he told me. He would announce his recognition of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima on the next auspicious date and then appeal directly and publicly to the Chinese government to accept the choice. Encouraged by his advisers, he had begun to see this as a gesture of conciliation: after all, the boy was in Tibet, under the control of the Chinese government, and the Dalai Lama would make no attempt to remove him. The boy's relatives had never been in contact with Dharamsala, so they could not fall under suspicion of collaboration. And the choice was the same as the preferred candidate of the search committee in Tibet. What happier resolution than that both sides agree?

I was skeptical. This was a naïve view of the Chinese regime, I suggested. In the bankrupt ideology of Beijing, there was little firm ground to stand on, but patriotism and the supremacy of the Han race were still certain bets. Over the past year, there had been a renewed crackdown on religious practice in Tibet. New restrictions had been placed on the numbers of people entering monasteries, and they were told that, while Buddhism would be tolerated, allegiance to the Dalai Lama would not.

There were other problems, which neither of us knew about at the time. Two days before we'd made our film in Dharamsala, the Tashilhunpo search committee had drawn up a short list of seven names from Chadrel's original twenty-eight. According to a later Chinese account, there was an argument. Chadrel, waiting for the messenger to arrive with the Dalai Lama's choice, had fought to keep his candidate, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, on the list. But he had failed to win decisive backing, and others on the committee had argued that the time had come to use the lottery of the Golden Urn.

The Golden Urn had been a present to Tibet from the Emperor Qianlong, a pious Buddhist, in 1792. He had suggested that, in the event of a disputed search for an important reincarnation, the candidates' names be placed in the urn and whichever was drawn be recognized. It had been used only occasionally, but now Beijing had seized on it as an essential symbol of China's power over Tibet. Chadrel, of course, had argued strongly against using the urn. In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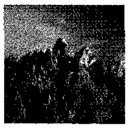

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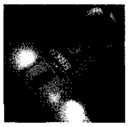

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NOV 2000

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mid-February, while I was in Lhasa, he had set out for Beijing to argue his case in person, accompanied, as usual, by his loyal assistant, Champa Chung-la. Since Chadrel had arrived in China, however, his movements had been restricted and his telephone calls closely monitored.

THE Dalai Lama felt that he had no choice but to make the announcement independently. The rumor that a lottery was being prepared had reached him in Dharamsala. It would be held very soon, the rumor went, and the results announced immediately. If the report was well founded, then the game had changed again. Beijing would announce first—and it might be the wrong child. The Dalai Lama and his advisers had scanned the calendar, guessing at a likely date for a Chinese announcement, and they feared that May 23rd, the anniversary of the treaty that had followed the Chinese invasion of Tibet, would be chosen, in order to stamp the choice with Beijing's political authority. The only auspicious date for the Dalai Lama to make an announcement before then was the anniversary of the day when the Buddha first gave the *Kalachakra* teaching, which fell on the fifteenth, he told me, ten days away. There was only one obstacle.

"I want to know Chadrel Rinpoche's opinion," the Dalai Lama said. He had not managed to reach him. Was there any way that I could get in touch with someone? he asked.

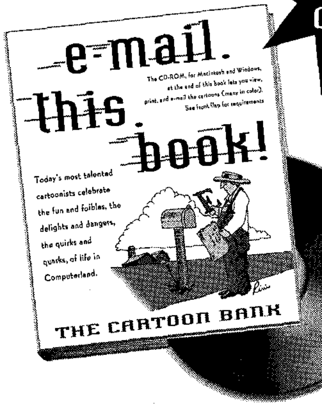
I felt myself being drawn more deeply into this process than I had ever envisaged. But it seemed absurd to refuse to make a telephone call, particularly when there was so much at stake. I promised to try to reach someone who might be able to help.

I went back to London and tried to call the schoolteacher. For several days, I had no luck: either nobody answered or a stranger would pick up the phone and I would have to hang up. Then, finally, I got through.

"They'll be announcing the new teacher's arrival on the fifteenth of May," I said. "But we need to know what the principal thinks."

That would be difficult, he said. The principal was travelling, but he would try to get the message through.

I heard nothing more. In Dharamsala, the Dalai Lama waited all week.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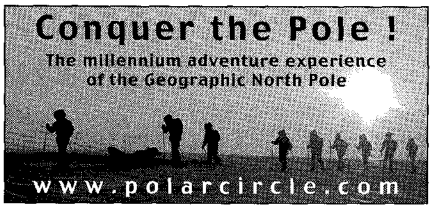
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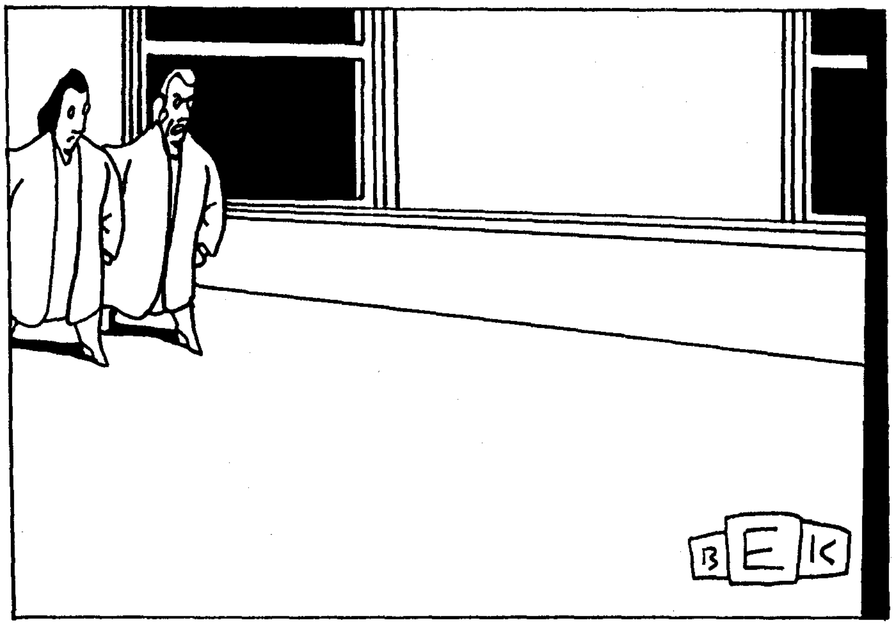


"Life sucks and then you keep living."

• •

The phones went down. A junior official was sent to Delhi to try to call Tibet, without success. Late in the morning of Saturday, May 13th, the Dalai Lama turned to his final resource, the method he had used repeatedly when faced with an impossible decision: he cast a divination. Was it the moment, he asked, to announce the choice of the eleventh Panchen Lama? The answer came back. It was.

THE Dalai Lama had told me that he would make the announcement on the fifteenth, a date I took to be the fifteenth of May. As it turned out, he had been speaking of the Tibetan calendar, and the date he meant was May 14th in the Western calendar. I had, I discovered later, sent a message with the wrong date.

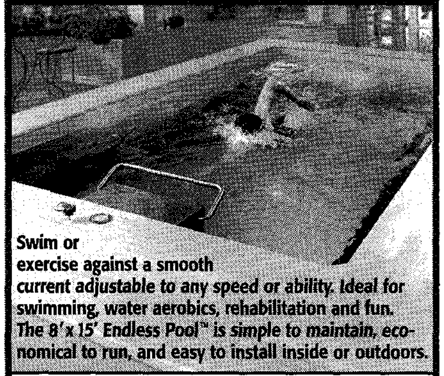
On the night of the thirteenth, a huge full moon hung over London. As I looked at it, I thought of what was about to happen. I had had to choose whether to be in Dharamsala for the announcement or to try to get to Tibet for the aftermath. I had chosen Tibet.

On the morning of the fourteenth, the Dalai Lama got up early, as usual, and spent his first hours in prayer. He was suffering the effects of a cold and was feeling feverish and short-tempered. Waiting for him in the hall of ceremonies at his hilltop compound was a hastily assembled collection of dignitaries. It was not a large crowd, but it included most of those whose opinion the Dalai Lama respected in the secular and religious balancing act that is his government-in-exile. At eight-thirty, seated cross-legged on his throne, he read a simple prayer that he had written for the occasion. He asked that Tibetans everywhere learn and recite it. It was a prayer for the long life of a six-year-old boy whose photograph was displayed to the Dalai Lama's right.

This was how the Tibetan community-in-exile, the Chinese government, and the boy himself came, finally, to hear the news that Gedhun Choekyi Nyima had been chosen as the eleventh incarnation of the Panchen Lama.

The Dalai Lama retired to nurse his cold, and the select group who had witnessed the ceremony fanned out to spread the news. Only a tiny circle had been privy to the long and complicated process that led up to the announcement. Those outside that circle assumed that the child's future was assured. Within a few hours, word of the announcement was running on all the major news wires, and the Voice of America was preparing to broadcast an audiotape of the Dalai Lama's special prayer into Tibet itself.

The following day, the announcement was reported in newspapers around the world. The Dalai Lama's of-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fice in Delhi was besieged with calls from news organizations that were picking up the story and trying to make sense of it. Beijing seemed equally nonplussed, and it took three days for a spokesman from the Bureau of Religious Affairs to respond officially: the Dalai Lama's announcement, he said, was illegal and invalid. But the story was far from over. What would happen to the child now? And to Chadrel?

I LEFT London the day after the announcement. It was summer and the route from Nepal into Tibet was open. I reached Lhasa five days later. Everyone I spoke with sounded nervous. "This is a very bad time," I was told.

I met with a friend the next day. He was tense and anxious. As we drove along a main street, a motorcycle came up to the driver's side of the car, keeping pace with us. The motorcyclist, who was wearing dark glasses, stared inside, holding his position for nearly half a minute before dropping behind.

In the back room of one of the many bad Chinese restaurants in Lhasa, we ordered food that neither of us touched. He told me that by early May it had become clear to Chadrel that he had lost the argument against the Golden Urn and he had prepared to return to Tibet. He had one last hope: if there had to be a lottery, he would somehow see that the right name was drawn. He had been in Chengdu, waiting for a plane to Lhasa, when the news had broken.

"They moved too soon," my friend complained. "We thought it was going to be the fifteenth. When the message got to Chadrel, he said that they absolutely must not make the announcement. I was about to telephone to get them to stop, but then I heard that the announcement had been made. We thought it was going to be the fifteenth, but it was the fourteenth."

"It was the Tibetan calendar," I said. "But I thought that Chadrel Rinpoche must have agreed."

"He did not agree," he said. His face was a mixture of bewilderment and pain. I thought of all that these people had done and the danger they were now in. Chadrel and his assistant had been detained. "They suspect him of collusion. They want to know how the Dalai

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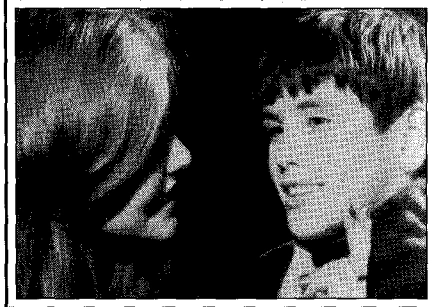

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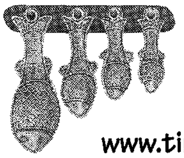

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Lama got the name. He has refused to denounce the Dalai Lama or to reject the choice."

The proprietor of the restaurant pushed aside the curtain and started to refill our tea glasses. Behind us, a window gave onto a small courtyard. We talked in whispers.

I had brought a copy of the Dalai Lama's statement and the prayer, but now I wondered whether it was safe to hand them over. I imagined the car being stopped after I left him, the incriminating documents found.

"If you don't want to take them now," I said, "I can keep them."

"No, I'll take them," he insisted, and they disappeared into his pocket. "Chadrel Rinpoche hasn't been tortured yet," he continued. "But I am worried about his assistant. He isn't well known. They might torture him."

Lhasa was full of rumors. Among them were some fragments of news. It was said that Gedhun Choekyi Nyima had been taken away with his father and mother and older brother. The family had been seen in the custody of the security forces, in Nagchu, then in Golmud. In Golmud, they had been put on a plane, and all traces of them had vanished. I was told that the area around Choekyi Nyima's birthplace, which risked becoming a site of pilgrimage, was now heavily patrolled.

We sat in front of the cold food. My friend shook his head. "Chadrel Rinpoche said that, whatever happens to him, he will never renounce this child," he repeated. "He wants the Dalai Lama to know that."

THE situation did not look good at the Tashilhunpo Monastery. A fifty-person "work team"—one of China's most effective tools of repression—had taken up residence there. Its mission was to force the monks to repudiate the chosen child and to demand a lottery to select another candidate.

The monks resisted. By mid-June, the confrontation had hardened, and extra troops were drafted into town to keep the peace. On July 10th, the monks were told that the government had proof of contact between Chadrel and the Dalai Lama. Chadrel's assistant, Champa Chung-la, had been brought to the monastery in handcuffs and interrogated. How, his interrogators wanted to know, had Chadrel collaborated with the Dalai Lama? How had he sent his letters, and had he sent any other documents? Champa Chung-la began to speak. He wanted to confess, he said. There had been contact, he admitted, but, with touching devotion, he insisted that he alone had been responsible. "I just wanted to insure that we found the right child," he said.

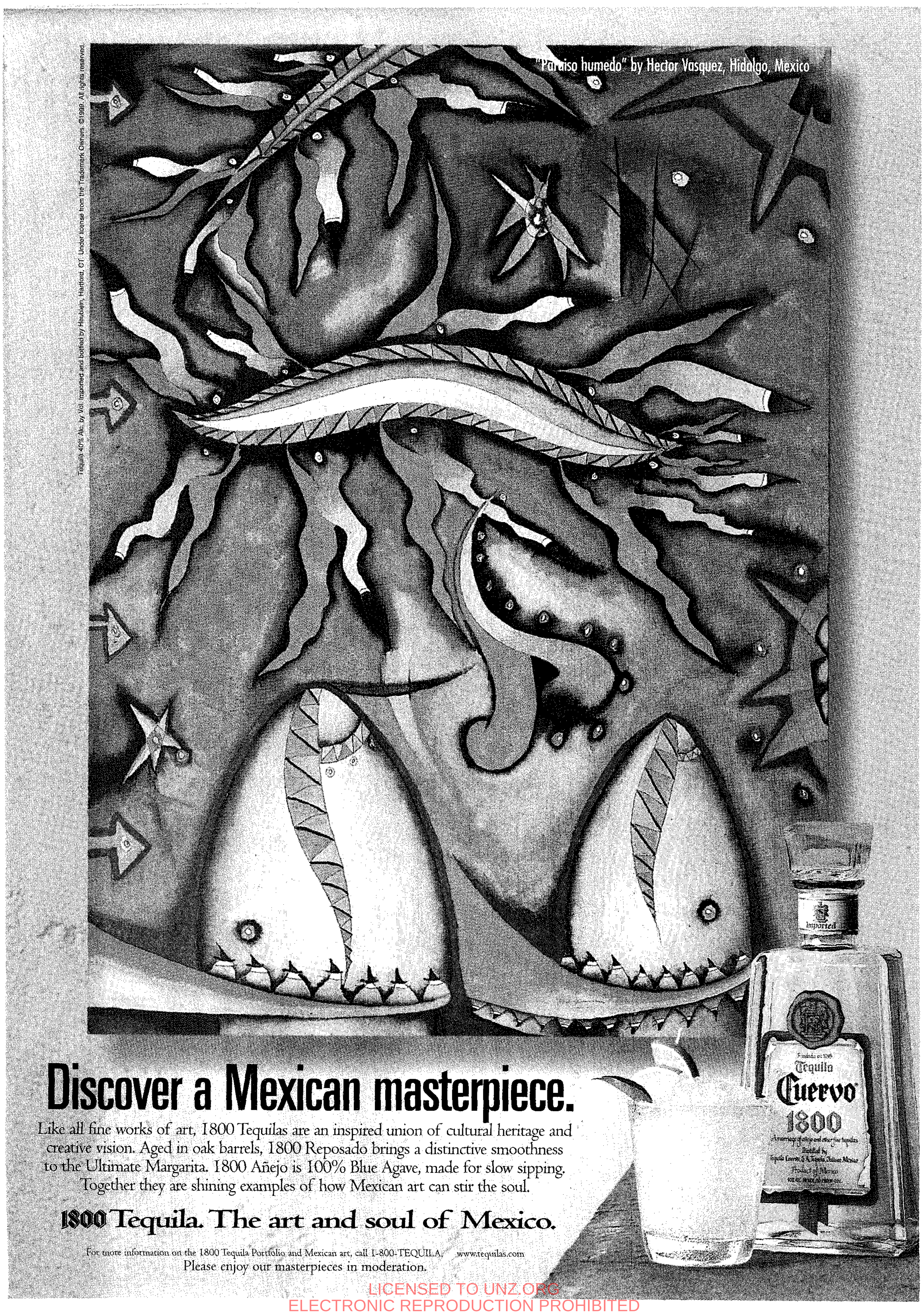
The authorities, confident now of their case, called a meeting in the monastery. The monks arrived in a truculent mood. They whistled and booed the senior Party leaders who had come to address them, and interrupted the local Party Secretary's long denunciation of Chadrel with catcalls. The meeting was abruptly abandoned, and the official cars drove off in a shower of stones thrown by angry monks.

At nine-thirty the next morning, three trucks, filled with police in riot gear, pulled into the gates. The crowd of Tibetans who had come to take part in one of the monastery's festivals became witnesses to the monks' final resistance. From behind the gates, they could hear the monks shouting, demanding that the Panchen Lama be brought to Tashilhunpo, and calling on the townspeople to enter the compound. After midnight, police raided the living quarters. Thirty-three monks were beaten and handcuffed, then driven in trucks to a prison nearby.

"They were in a terrible state," said a monk who had seen them arrive from the window of his own prison cell. "They were handcuffed, their clothes were torn, and they were covered in blood." The group included many senior religious figures and several who had been personally close to the Panchen Lama. In prison, the cries continued as the monks were beaten into "confession."

The next day, the town was under the control of security forces. Chadrel was formally dismissed, and a man whom the monks had long regarded as a Chinese puppet was given his job. Of Chadrel there was no news. He was "ill," Chinese authorities said, and was undergoing medical treatment.

BEIJING named its own Panchen Lama a full four months later, on November 29, 1995. Just after midnight, in the chilly first moments of the



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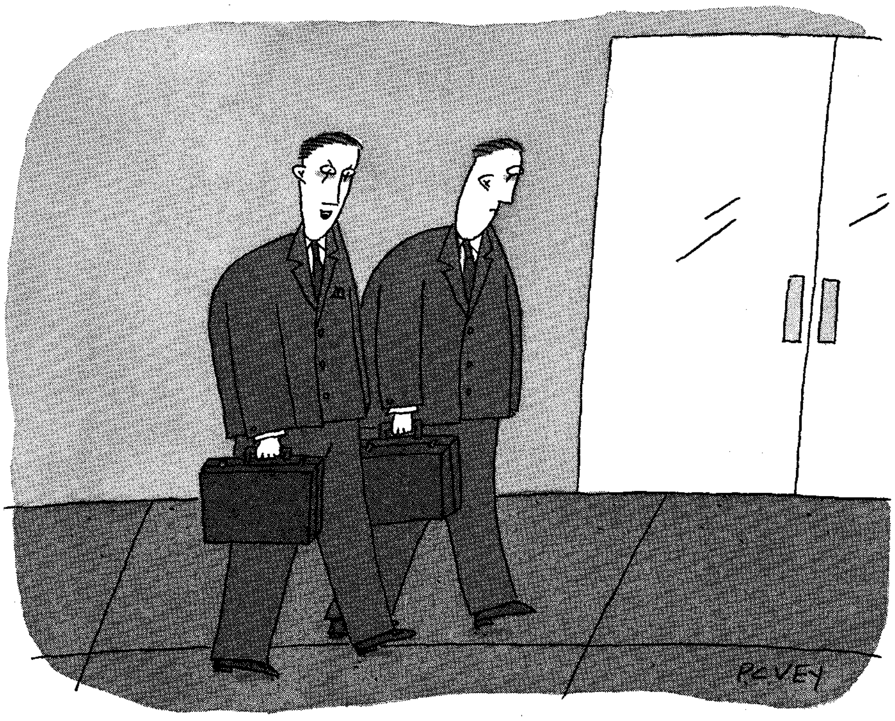
day, several hundred monks and a smaller group of high-ranking government officials assembled in the dim interior of the Jokhang Temple, in Lhasa. Three young boys, who had also appeared on Chadrel's list of candidates, took their seats. Among the monks were the new leaders of Tashilhunpo and a respected lama, Bomi Rinpoche, who had been chosen to perform the ritual.

At 2 A.M., three ivory tallies, each inscribed with a name, were solemnly shown to the officials and to the parents of the three boys. The tallies were then wrapped in yellow silk and placed in the urn, which was waved around like an oversized cocktail shaker. Then Bomi Rinpoche drew out a tally and handed it to the chairman of the Tibet Autonomous Region, who read out a name. The officials burst into loud, if rather artificial, cheers. The monks sat expressionless, eyes downcast.

The boy whose "lucky number" had come up, as the official report put it, was named Gyaltsen Norbu. His parents, unlike Gedhun Choekyi Nyima's, according to the Dalai Lama, were both members of the Communist Party. Given the strictures against Party members' observing any religious belief, the recognition of their son as a reincarnate lama in any other circumstances would have landed the couple in hot water. To date, however, their deviation has gone unpunished. In another departure from orthodoxy, the official press publicized accounts of miraculous, authenticating evidence of a kind that had rarely graced the pages of any official newspaper. The boy's birth, it seemed, had been accompanied by a series of remarkable events. People had "beamed with happiness" and commented that he "might be the incarnation of a god." A bird with the beautiful wings of a peacock had turned up a few months later (perhaps delayed by the fierce prevailing winds) and had circled the family house for several days before nesting on the roof. A teacher had observed the sacred letter *Ah* on the boy's tongue, and his mother had dreamed that one of Tibet's most honored guardian deities was cradling him in her arms.

In Dharamsala, the Dalai Lama issued a statement describing the Chinese action as "unfortunate" and appealed to all governments and religious and human-rights organizations to intervene to insure the safety of the real Panchen Lama. Beijing's response was a long attack on the Dalai Lama's nominee. The boy, it said, had "once drowned a dog." His parents were "notorious among their neighbors for speculation, deceit and scrambling for fame and profit." In case ordinary pious Tibetans



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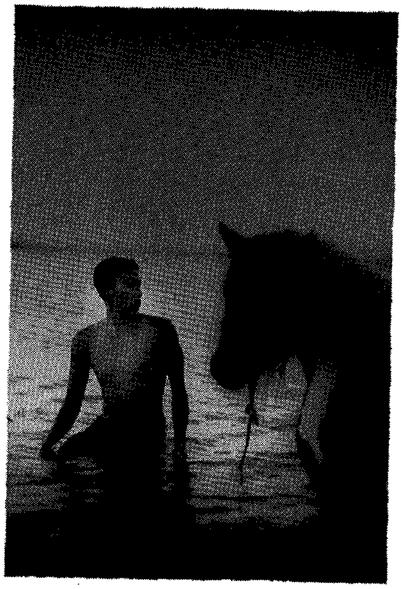

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took a different view, possession of a photograph of the boy was banned.

Nine days after the Golden Urn lottery, Gyaltsen Norbu was enthroned in a heavily guarded ceremony in Tashilhunpo Monastery, then flown to Beijing. There he was filmed exchanging *khatas*—ceremonial scarves—with a beaming President Jiang Zemin. But the limits of the government's success became apparent when the boy was not returned to Tashilhunpo Monastery. Instead, he was installed in a heavily guarded villa that lies in the hills on the outskirts of Beijing. It is a comfortable prison, but it was an odd choice for a child whose destiny was to be a religious leader in Tibet. Were the authorities afraid for the safety of the child, or was his confinement intended to remove him from the influence of the Tashilhunpo monks?

In the outside world, there were protests. The European and Australian parliaments passed resolutions of condemnation, as did the United States Senate. Such protests were unacceptable, the Chinese government said: the selection of the Panchen Lama was an "internal affair."

In May, 1996, the Chinese government finally acknowledged that it had detained Gedhun Choekyi Nyima. Summoned to answer for his whereabouts before the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, China's Ambassador to the United Nations in Geneva admitted that the boy had been put "under the protection of the government." His parents, he said, had requested the detention, fearful that he might be kidnapped by "Tibetan separatists." Last year, the Chinese Foreign Ministry announced that he was "living with family members and everything is good."

News of Chadrel's fate did not come out until the spring of 1997. He had been found guilty, an official announcement said, of "leaking state secrets" and "splitting the country." He had been sentenced to six years in prison. His assistant, Champa Chung-la, was convicted on the same charges and sentenced to four years. The trial was held in secret, according to the official explanation, because the charges against the defendants involved "state secrets." The messenger who carried word of the Dalai La-

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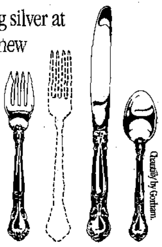
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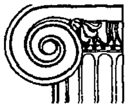
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ma's choice through the mountains was sentenced to a prison term of two years.

I SAW the Dalai Lama again several times, and we discussed the sad end of a story that had begun with such high hopes. The Dalai Lama was grieved by the outcome, and worried about the Panchen. I asked whether he regretted making the announcement that had precipitated the final crisis.

"No," he replied. "I conducted my own religious investigation as to whether I should make the announcement and it was positive. So I have no regrets."

But earlier this year, when I broached the subject with him again, he revealed how much personal anguish the whole affair had cost him. "I feel that I committed the crime here, and they took the punishment there," he said.

The consequences reached far beyond Tashilhunpo. Traditionally, the Panchen Lama must recognize the new incarnation of the Dalai Lama. This Dalai Lama is now sixty-four, and at some point he, too, will take temporary leave of this world and seek a rebirth. Who will now have the authority to recognize his reincarnation? Gedhun Choekyi Nyima may never emerge from the shadows of his confinement, and a reincarnation identified by Gyaltsen Norbu would carry little authority. The present Dalai Lama has often said that he may be the last of the line. I asked him why.

"It's up to the Tibetan people," he replied. "If in twenty years' time they feel it is irrelevant, then there will be no more Dalai Lamas." He continued, "Sometimes I think this present stupid Dalai Lama may not be the best, but he's not the worst, either. I think it might be better to make a dignified farewell, in case some other Dalai Lama comes along and disgraces himself." He burst out laughing, then resumed, "But if there is another Dalai Lama I have made it clear that the next reincarnation will certainly appear outside Chinese control."

As he looked at the photograph of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, I asked him what he imagined the child was feeling.

He sighed. "I don't know. As a human being, he will feel frustration and fear, and I think he will have a lot of questions. When I look at his photograph, I feel very sorry that he should have become a political prisoner through no fault of his own."

But, while supporters around the world were preparing petitions and letter-writing campaigns on behalf of "the world's youngest political prisoner," the Dalai Lama was, on one level, serene. If the child was the correct choice, as he believed him to be, then he would remain the Panchen Lama, whatever happened.

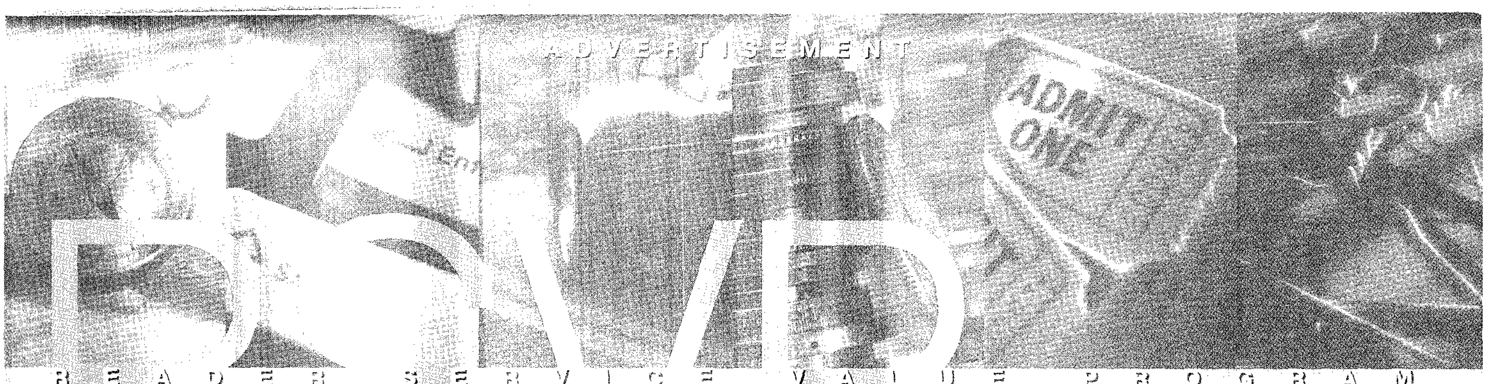
His followers in Tibet seem to agree. Copies of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima's photograph have appeared in homes across Tibet. The more the Chinese denounce him, a refugee monk told me a few weeks ago, the more the Tibetans will believe in him. To that extent, if there is a moral to this strange contest, it is the old lesson that force rarely triumphs over faith.

Faith, however, had not proved able to save the child from his life of confinement. I asked a well-informed Tibetan in Beijing what he thought the Chinese would do with Gedhun Choekyi Nyima.

"If I were them," he replied, "I would bring him up stupid."

THERE were no winners in the search for the Panchen Lama. Tibet now has two Panchen Lamas and no Panchen Lama. The child in whom Tibetans believe is deprived of the religious education he needs to fulfill his role. The other, the government boasts, can now "recite sutras for three successive days." Gyaltsen Norbu, according to the Xinhua news agency, "is now the esteemed and beloved religious leader of Tibetan people," something the Chinese have long hoped to achieve.

But in June of this year it was clear how far the official claim is from the reality. Four years after the government crushed the Tashilhunpo revolt, Gyaltsen Norbu was briefly returned to the monastery to attend the most important annual religious festival. The boy arrived in a twenty-one-vehicle police motorcade that swept past the waiting foreign press and the congregation. He stayed only an hour before he was spirited away again, his visit to Tashilhunpo just another instance of the empty ritual that Beijing calls religious freedom in Tibet. Played another way, the search for the eleventh Panchen Lama might have brought a measure of reconciliation between Tibet and China. The Chinese have their Panchen Lama now, but they have damaged—perhaps fatally—the institution itself. ◆



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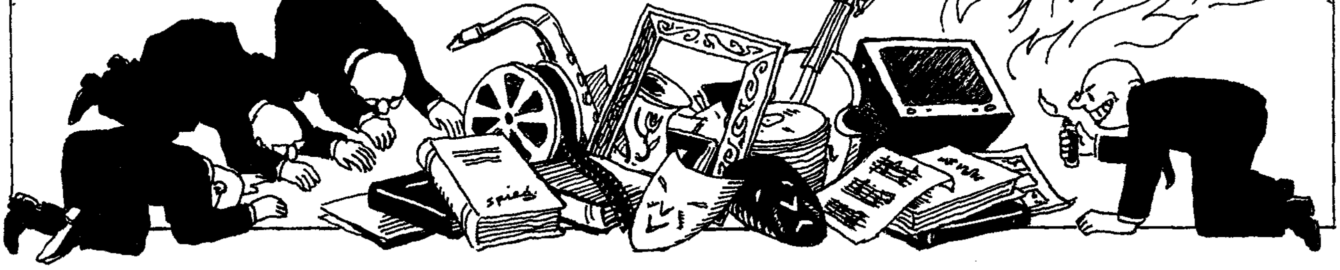

BOOKS

COLD COMFORT

Why the winner became the loser in the race to the South Pole.

BY JOHN BANVILLE

IN May of this year, a party of climbers discovered the body of George Mallory frozen to a rock two thousand feet below the peak of Mt. Everest. The body had rested there undisturbed for seventy-five years, since the day in June, 1924, when Mallory failed to return from an attempt to scale the mountain. The corpse was dressed in tweeds and hobnailed boots; in the jacket pocket were some cough lozenges, a penknife, and a pair of goggles. It would not have been a surprise to learn that he still had his pipe in his mouth.

Mallory was the quintessential English hero, the inspired amateur who, despite terrible conditions, and with scant preparation, risks the impossible. It was he who gave the famous reason for his repeated attempts to conquer Everest: "Because it's there." He had the qualities of the knight-errant; even his name is a homophone for that of the author of "Le Morte d'Arthur." That he perished in his final effort to reach the top of Everest only adds lustre to his reputation, especially for his fellow-countrymen, who often seem to prefer failure to success: what other nation would have turned the rout of Dunkirk into one of its finest hours?

In the case of Mallory, there is a further piquancy in the possibility that he died not on the ascent to the top but on the return. The fact that he was not wearing his goggles has led to speculation that he had been descending the mountain when he fell, for if he was going down, the light would have been failing and goggles would not have been needed. Could it be that this English schoolmaster, in his Norfolk jacket and stout boots, had scaled the world's highest mountain with the ease of a gentleman taking a brisk stroll on a summer afternoon? Goodbye, Mr. Chips, indeed.

Success and failure are, of course, matters of perspective. In the popular imagination, the possibility that the ill-equipped Mallory was the first man to climb Everest throws a harsh light on his latter-day successors, making them seem almost a bunch of sissies, with their state-of-the-art gear, corporate sponsors, and lucrative book deals. The attitude is not a new one, nor is it confined to readers of the yellow press. When the well-prepared and circumspect Roald Amundsen beat Robert Scott to the South Pole, the Norwegian ambassador to Britain reported that in the highest London circles it was considered "a dirty trick altogether" that "a professional" should have come first in the race to the Pole. Indeed, it had not been a race at all, according to the popular *Pall Mall Gazette;* Captain Scott, the paper reprovingly declared, "was not lent by the Admiralty to take part in a Marathon race" but was in the Antarctic to seek answers to "questions of the utmost scientific importance," and the message to this effect that he had sent home "is one of which Captain Scott's countrymen may be prouder than if he had been able to announce that he had arrived at the South Pole slightly in advance of Amundsen."

This is tosh. Had Scott reached the Pole even "slightly in advance" of his foreign rival, England would have been triumphant. It was 1911, and the country was deep in a crisis of national degeneration. It needed all the successes it could get, but if it was to have only failures they must be made the best of. Scott, the heroic loser, writing his last testament to the world even as he was freezing to

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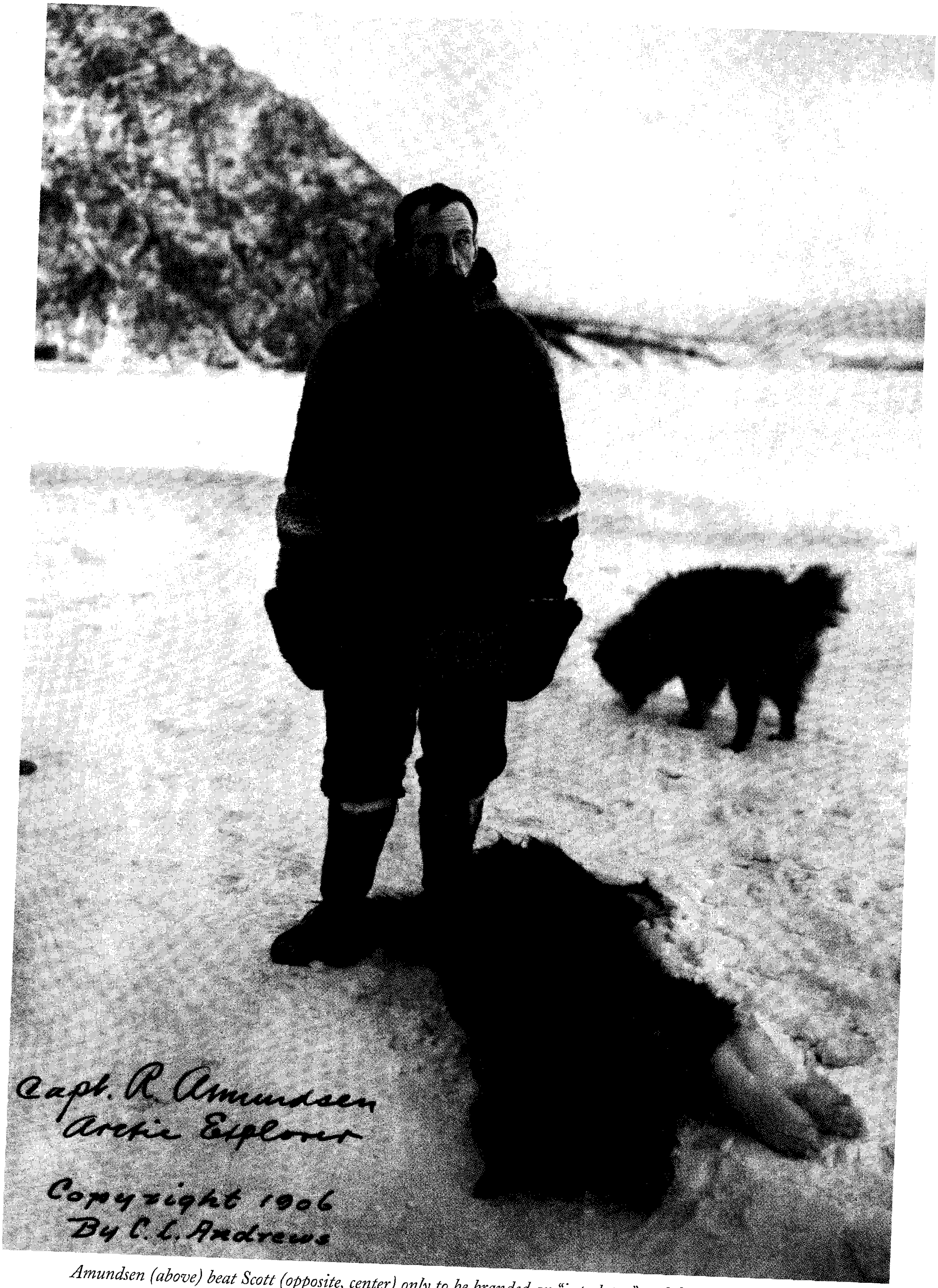
Capt. R. Amundsen
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Amundsen (above) beat Scott (opposite, center) only to be branded an "interloper" and denounced as a cheat.

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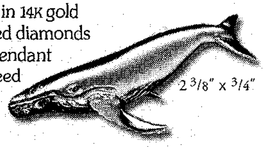

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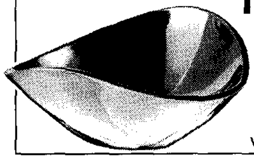

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SCREENED PORCH

The stars were foolish, they were not worth waiting for.
The moon was shrouded, fragmentary.
Twilight like silt covered the hills.
The great drama of human life was nowhere evident—
but for that, you don't go to nature.

The terrible harrowing story of a human life,
the wild triumph of love: they don't belong
to the summer night, panorama of hills and stars.

We sat on our terraces, our screened porches,
as though we expected to gather, even now,
fresh information or sympathy. The stars
glittered a bit above the landscape, the hills
suffused still with a faint retroactive light.
Darkness. Luminous earth. We stared out, starved for knowledge,
and we felt, in its place, a substitute:
indifference that appeared benign.

Solace of the natural world. Panorama
of the eternal. The stars
were foolish, but somehow soothing. The moon
presented itself as a curved line.
And we continued to project onto the glowing hills
qualities we needed: fortitude, the potential
for spiritual advancement.

Immunity to time, to change. Sensation
of perfect safety, the sense of being
protected from what we loved—

And our intense need was absorbed by the night
and returned as sustenance.

—LOUISE GLÜCK

death, remained a potent symbol of the English spirit at its finest—until twenty years ago, when Roland Huntford published his account of the contest, "Scott and Amundsen" (later retitled "The Last Place on Earth").

THE book has now appeared in the Modern Library Exploration series, which also includes "Starlight and Storm," Gaston Rébuffat's luminous account of his conquest of the six great north faces of the Alps, and Francis Parkman's masterpiece, "La Salle and the Discovery of the Great West," first published in 1869. (The general editor on the series is Jon Krakauer, who may have triggered the current fascination for expedition chronicles with his best-selling memoir, "Into Thin Air.") In the introduction to "The Last Place on Earth," Paul Theroux, referring to the protests which greeted the book when it was originally published in England, is perhaps disingenuous in saying that all Huntford had done was to have written "a riveting account of two expeditions intending simultaneously to achieve the South Pole." Certainly Huntford's book is "riveting," but his distaste for Scott, intensifying in places to outright contempt, is still striking, twenty years later.

Huntford shows Scott to have been an "insecure, unhappy, emotional disciplinarian" whose "instincts were to evade responsibility and shift the blame," a falsifier of records—including his own diaries—and a crybaby. Conversely, Huntford's portrait of Amundsen amounts almost to hero worship. The Norwegian is presented as a figure out of a Norse saga; specifically, he is compared to Askeladden, "perhaps *the* myth figure of Norway . . . the underdog with hidden powers who eventually uses them and comes out on top." Often, what Huntford presents as heroism and good sense in Amundsen become foolhardiness and low cunning in Scott. Yet Amundsen was perfectly ready to plot and deceive in order to gain advantage over his opponent. When Scott announced his intention to try for the Pole, Amundsen wrote to his supplier of huskies, "If you receive other orders for dogs I hope you will remember that I was first," a piece of prudence "clearly aimed at forestalling Scott," as Huntford admits. Amundsen also kept secret his plan to race Scott to the Pole, not even informing the other members of the expedition of the real destination until their ship had docked at Madeira on the way to the Antarctic. Even a Norse hero can stoop to chicanery. Nor was he the only one among his countrymen to deceive the hapless Scott, as we shall see later.

Amundsen had already achieved renown by being the first to navigate the Northwest Passage. He next set his sights, naturally, on the North Pole, a prize on which other eyes were already fixed. In 1908, the endearingly crooked American Frederick Cook (he ended up in prison for fraud) announced that he had reached the Pole, a claim that was discredited; a year later, Robert Peary succeeded where Cook had lied. Nevertheless, that same year an apparently disgruntled Amundsen organized an expedition ostensibly bound for the Arctic. Not only did he keep his real intentions secret from his companions but he also misled his patron, the great Fridtjof Nansen.

If Amundsen is a figure from a saga, Nansen, tall, blond, death-laden, is straight out of Wagner. In 1888, he had achieved fame by making a heroic crossing of Greenland. His most remarkable adventure, however, was the journey he undertook in 1893 on the Fram. He deliberately allowed the ship to be locked into the Arctic ice north of Siberia, so that over a period of years it might be carried by the current toward Greenland, passing close by the North Pole. When the ship reached eighty-four degrees north, in March of 1895, he and one of his crew, Hjalmer Johansen, left it and skied across the ice to eighty-four degrees fourteen minutes, the highest latitude yet reached. Returning, they failed to find the ship, which by now had moved on with the current, and after a seven-hundred-mile journey over the ice in search of land, they were compelled to spend the winter on an Arctic island, their only shelter a tumbledown hut. When summer came, they met an English explorer, Frederick Jackson, and were rescued.

The voyage of the Fram, the journey over the ice, and especially the meeting with Jackson, so reminiscent of Stanley's momentous encounter with Livingstone, in 1871, caught the public imagination, and Nansen became, in the words of an English journalist, "our popular gladiator." Nansen's own account of the expedition, "Farthest North," another reprint in the Modern Library series, became a worldwide best-seller. Roland Huntford, who supplies an introduction for the new edition, remarks, "What might have been merely a nine-day wonder turned into a saga of the age." Nansen, with his dash-

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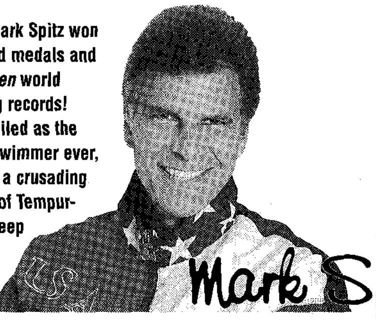

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—Mark Spitz, America's all-time champion swimmer

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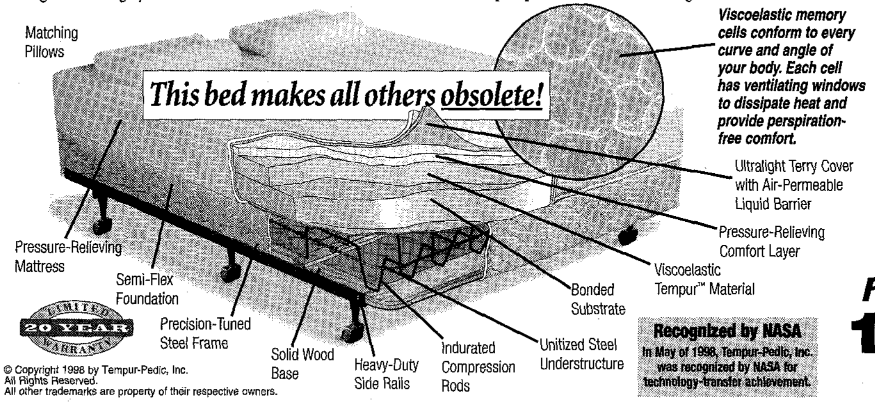
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ing style and Nordic good looks, was, as Huntford says, "A figure from the frozen outlands . . . an inspiration for a world in which the fear of decadence was rampant."

Nansen was also a highly practical explorer and an innovator of genius. The passages in "Farthest North" on the building of the Fram are a delight, and worthy of Defoe, or the Swift of "Gulliver's Travels." The designer was Colin Archer, a Norwegian of Scottish ancestry. Archer's idea was to construct it in such a way that when the ice pack contracted around the boat it would simply rise instead of being crushed, so he designed a broad, squat, sturdy vessel with a shallow, rounded keel. Among the problems he faced was that of condensation; frequently sailors on Arctic voyages would turn in to find icicles hanging from the sides of their bunks and their mattresses slabs of ice. The solutions devised by Archer were wonderfully ingenious, involving everything from linoleum panels on the walls of the cabins to reindeer-hair stuffing in the hollows of the ceilings. The little ship, a splendid example of the shipwright's craft, is one of the heroes not only of "Farthest North" but also of Amundsen's story in "The Last Place on Earth."

For Amundsen, Nansen was a cross between a father figure and one of the immortals. Huntford describes Amundsen the supplicant climbing to Polhøgda (The Polar Heights), Nansen's vast, dark mansion "rising on a knoll above the forest" on the banks of a fjord near Christiania, as Oslo was then called, to ask for the use of the Fram, and it might be a scene from the "Ring." Nansen delivered the craft into Amundsen's care with a heavy heart, knowing that his days of glory were at an end, and that a new hero was in the making.

NANSEN had already shown that dogs and skis are the ideal means of polar travel. This contrasts with the attitude of his British counterparts. While Amundsen, following Nansen, was preparing his Norwegian skis and purchasing his Greenland dogs, Sir Clements Markham, in Huntford's words "the father of British Antarctic exploration," was propounding the rule for Englishmen who would venture onto the ice: "No skis. No dogs." Skis were disliked by Sir Clements simply, it seems, because they were "foreign," and dogs were considered incapable of hauling the tons of equipment and supplies needed for an attempt to reach the

ADVENTURE

ROPE BURN

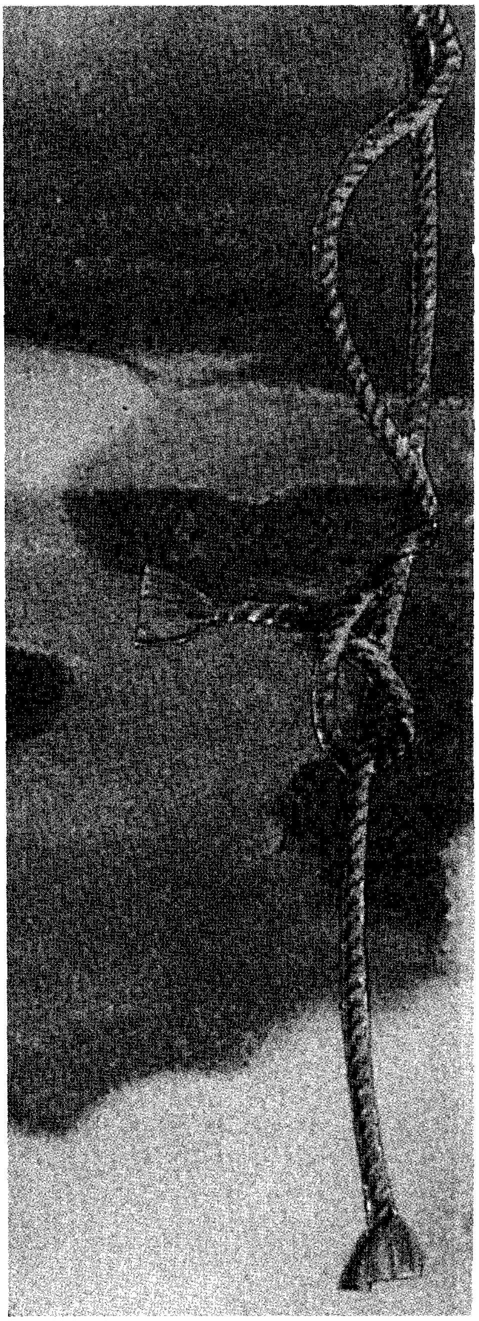
THE link between the sacred and the profane is a tenuous one, but never more so than at Debra Damo, the oldest monastery in black Africa. The monastery sits at the edge of a fifty-foot cliff, right on top of a mountain in the Ethiopian highlands. For the past fifteen hundred years, the only thing that has connected it to the secular world below is a couple of leather ropes that dangle from its gatehouse.

Not long ago, I found myself at the base of the cliff, peering up and asking myself just how badly I wanted to make it up there. I'd had a lifelong fascination with Africa—I had spent a year in rural Tanzania when I was a college student, had studied African cultures as an adult, and had recently begun making a series of documentaries about the continent. This time, I thought I'd explore some of Africa's less visited corners, and that's how I ended up contemplating the doubtful integrity of an extremely elderly piece of leather.

According to legend, the monastery was founded by Za-Mikael, one of the Nine Saints who spread the doctrine of Christianity through the region. Since there was no way to scale the mountain, he decided that its top would be a perfect place for worship, meditation, prayer, and penitence. But how to get there? God conveniently commanded a snake to coil its tail around Za-Mikael and lift him to the pinnacle. God also commanded the Archangel Gabriel to stand guard with a drawn sword as Za-Mikael ascended and insure that the snake would do him no harm, because—well, you never know with snakes. The monk shouted "Hallelujah!" when he arrived at the mountaintop, and thus the monastery gained one of its bynames, Debra Hallelujah.

Za-Mikael's miracle soon attracted the attention of a great king of the region, who granted the saint's request that a church be built on the site where the serpent had deposited him. In order to build the church, the king first had a ramp constructed. Then, once the church was completed, Za-Mikael uttered the word *dahmemo*, which means "take it off," and the ramp was destroyed. *Dahmemo* was eventually shortened to "*damo*," thereby giving the monastery its most common name.

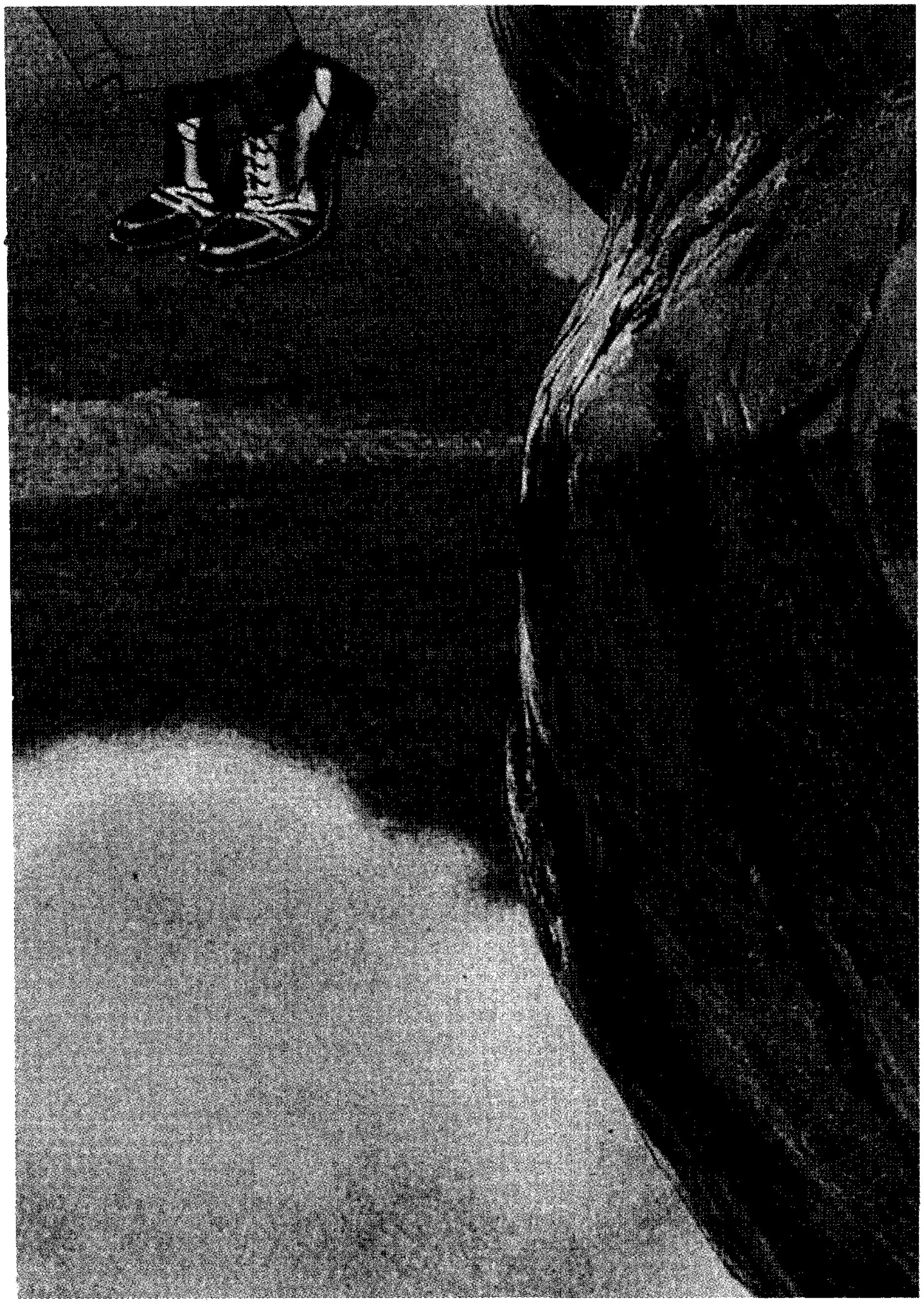
AS I stood at the base of the cliff—and just to get that far had taken a twenty-minute climb past huge boulders and gnarled, ancient-looking tree roots—all I could see at the top was a doorlike frame. Before me were the two ropes, one made of plaited leather and the other of sewn-together strips of cowhide, swaying gently in the breeze. What I wanted was a little chair, strapped securely to a failsafe rope-and-pulley mechanism, and a few robust, youthful monks at the top, pulling me smoothly up the face of the mountain. But there was no chair; no



harness; no system of pulleys; no robust monks at the top waiting to welcome the pilgrim home to Mother Africa. There was only one old monk, about my father's age, pretending that he could pull me up by that cowhide strap, which was so frayed and discolored that it might have dated back to the sixth century. He looked like a bronzed elf as he peered over the edge of the cliff, his snow-white goatee framed by what I imagined was the door to eternity.

The end of the strap was formed into a loop, and it slipped easily over my head and settled around my chest. Suddenly, I felt it go taut. My instructions now were *to grasp hold of the plaited leather rope* and, hand over hand, to walk my way up the precipice, my body parallel to the ground. My feet found their way into crevices worn into the cliff, and I began to scale it, like the human fly, or a cat burglar, or, anyway, someone who knew his way around the Ethiopian highlands. Then, when I was about halfway up, my feet lost their grip and, as the craggy, nearly vertical incline gave way to a sheer, smooth rockface, slipped off the side of the mountain. I was now dangling from the line, unanchored, like a side of beef. The strap constricted my chest like a noose, and I could scarcely breathe.

My abject terror settled on a question: Which vista would be less sickening—the view down or the view up? Should I contemplate the twenty-five-foot drop to the rocks below or the equivalently daunting distance that separated me from the sanctuary in the sky? It was onward and upward for me, and, with considerable difficulty, I summoned my breath to urge on the wizened monk: "Pull... pull... pull!" I couldn't swear he'd heard me, but I could see his face, and the strain of my dead weight was showing.



In Ethiopia, a monk has the legal status of a dead man. Monks pay no taxes, do not appear in censuses, and cannot vote. They are, in fact, known as "the Living Dead." They read scripture in the ancient ecclesiastical language of Geez. They dedicate their lives to preparing for Heaven. All in all, I wasn't convinced that this monk would handle what I now considered my lifeline in entirely the right spirit. If the rope snapped and I fell to my death, he might think I'd been done a favor. That wasn't the kind of salvation I was hoping for. Besides, the holy geezer scarcely seemed strong enough to raise me, and my body hung uselessly in midair, legs pumping like Wile E. Coyote's just before he realizes that he has overshot the cliff.

Then I noticed that I'd begun to move—slowly, inch by inch, but steadily, until the wooden stump to which the rope was tied came into my view. I reached out and grabbed it, and soon found myself dragged through the open door to safety. Hallelujah.

"You saved my life," I gasped pathetically. I was winded by the grip of the leather around my chest, marks from which would be visible for several days. For a brief while, I lay there on the sacred earth, promising God and myself that I would try to be a better person, and wondering what grand act of charity I could embark upon to make things right with the order of the universe. Only then did I realize that within a few hours I would have to go through it all over again: there was no other way down. What if I stayed where I was—dedicating myself to the hereafter, taking a vow of poverty, joining the Living Dead in an existence of communal holiness? That prospect was, just at that moment, more pleasing than the alternative. My beard would grow snowy, my skin leathery from the highland rays, and my arms sinewy and strong. My eyes would acquire the faraway serenity of the truly sanctified. I wondered how long it would take me to become fluent in Geez. —Henry Louis Gates, Jr.

WINSTON SMITH

BRIEFLY NOTED

Inventing Paradise: The Greek Journey, by Edmund Keeley (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $24). In July, 1939, Henry Miller arrived in Greece during a heat wave and was befriended by Lawrence Durrell, the poet George Seferis, and the poet's friend George Katsimbalis, the title character of Miller's book about his Greek adventure, "The Colossus of Maroussi." In this masterly weave of scholarship and personal experience, Keeley, a renowned translator of modern Greek poetry, uses letters, journals, poems, and his own lucid prose to re-create the world of Miller's "little band of friends" and track them through the war. He has this tip for the contemporary seeker, whether of Paradise or of Ithaca: "You must approach what is before you as a free spirit or quickly learn how to become one."

The Nudist on the Late Shift, by Po Bronson (Random House; $25). In this panoptical survey of Silicon Valley, Bronson functions as an anthropologist of the information economy, cataloguing the behavior of a diverse but driven population that is creating—and was created by—untold wealth, in businesses that barely existed a decade ago. Equally at home with sleep-deprived programming geeks, ambitious Internet entrepreneurs, hard-nosed venture capitalists, and wispy futurists, he cuts through the jargon, patiently explaining difficult financial and technical abstractions while providing an entertaining and often dramatic account of frenetic and interlocking worlds. Rich in character and anecdote, the book conveys with unusual immediacy the volatility of an environment where billion-dollar ideas are a dime a dozen.

Godforsaken Sea, by Derek Lundy (Algonquin; $22.95). Lundy, an amateur mariner, here provides an account of the 1996-97 Vendée Globe, a sailing race that crosses the Southern Ocean, one of the planet's few remaining remote, treacherous expanses. The race demands intrepid self-reliance and ingenuity: its competitors must circumnavigate the globe alone, and with no ports of call, which necessitates breaking almost all the safety precautions of good seamanship. Sixteen boats began the race; six finished. A mixture of history, gripping narrative, and provocative meditation, Lundy's book conveys "a wilderness both fascinating and appalling," which has changed little since Coleridge wrote about it in "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner."

Between Silk and Cyanide: A Codemaker's War, 1941-1945, by Leo Marks (Free Press; $27.50). The Special Operations Executive was a secret British unit that parachuted agents into Europe to lead resistance groups in sabotaging the German war effort; from the moment the twenty-year-old Marks went to work in cryptography there, he questioned everything the S.O.E. codemakers were doing. Marks portrays his younger self as an irreverent, undisciplined nerd, but his cockiness was driven by his concern for the agents, whom he got to know when he briefed them on their codes before they were dropped. Marks's tales of the in-house battles he fought to make the agents' coded radio transmissions more secure are quite funny, and his stories about the agents themselves—men and women of great courage—are riveting.

People Who Sweat, by Robin Chotzinoff (Harcourt Brace; $22). In 1995, Chotzinoff, an undistinguished middle-aged athlete in search of the ideal sport, trained for, and survived, a quadrathlon. The forty-four mile endurance race was hellish, and yet, she tells us, she finished with a desire to "try it all." The result was this three-year log of encounters with enthusiasts of various peculiar and painful sports (one-legged tree climbing, "art" roller skating, "scum tube" caving). The author's humility and humor regarding her own lack of athletic prowess when she's in the company of hard-core thrill fanatics keeps this book safely off the shelves of self-improvement and more comfortably (although no less obsessively) ensconced near the chatty diary of Bridget Jones.

Love Across Color Lines: Ottilie Assing and Frederick Douglass, by Maria Diedrich (Hill & Wang; $35). In 1852, Ottilie Assing, a cultivated German-Jewish radical, arrived in New York to participate in the great American experiment. Four years later, enamored of the writings of the famous black abolitionist Frederick Douglass, she travelled to Rochester to interview him for a German newspaper. The intimate friendship that followed was a literary and intellectual collaboration as well, and it lasted for nearly thirty years. When the first Mrs. Douglass, who was black, finally died, in 1882, Assing assumed that Douglass would send for her, but instead he married another white woman, who, like Assing, shared his radical beliefs but was considerably younger. Assing committed suicide less than six months later. Diedrich explores history, race, gender, and culture: her book touches us most deeply, however, as a tale of personal risk and disillusionment.

Full Moon, by Michael Light (Knopf; $50). During NASA's Apollo missions, astronauts brought back thirty-two thousand photographs of the round-trip journey between the planet Earth and the moon, many of them snapped by the astronauts themselves with chest-mounted Hasselblads. The photographer Michael Light combed through this vast archive, selecting startling images that, although taken thirty years ago, still look like the future: stubbly astronauts profiled in unfiltered sunlight; an improbably fragile-looking gold-and-silver lunar module hovering over the pocked, colorless lunar horizon; Buzz Aldrin's bootprint, destined to remain in the moon's silty soil for a million years; and a bouquet of red reëntry parachutes bursting open, signalling a mission accomplished.

Pole. Markham is a particularly representative example of British pigheadedness. He saw Amundsen as an "interloper" and a "gadfly," and denounced him as a cheat after he had beaten Scott to the Pole. By "cheating" he seems to have meant that Amundsen made his preparations as carefully as possible, and on the journey did not take unnecessary risks; in other words, that he was a professional, and therefore anathema. As Huntford pointedly says, for Markham "the squandering of human effort was the expression of an ideal."

There is a faint but distinct sulfuric glow when this Mephistophelian figure strides onto the pages of Huntford's book. Markham, a married homosexual with an eye for a sailor laddie, did all in his power to further the career of Scott, the son of a brewer who had made his way, not without struggle, up through the ranks of the Navy. It was Markham who pressed the Admiralty, as well as the Royal Society and the Royal Geographical Society, to support Scott in his attempt to reach the Pole. Scott himself, though ambitious, had deep doubts about his own abilities, of body, mind, and heart. Here he is writing of himself in 1890, at the age of twenty-two:

> It is only given to us cold, slowly-wrought natures to feel this dreary, deadly tightening at the heart. . . . How can I bear it? I write of the future, of the hopes of being more worthy, but shall I ever be? . . . No one will ever see these words, therefore I may freely write, "What does it all mean?"

This plaintive cry for an answer in the emptiness contrasts strongly with the Nordic stoicism that is so well expressed in a reply Nansen gave to a friend who had asked him what he considered to be the meaning of life: "Life has no meaning. There is nothing called meaning in nature. Meaning is a purely human concept which we put into existence." It is a view that surely Amundsen shared, despite his subscription to what Huntford identifies as "a kind of primitive Monotheism not uncommon among Norwegians." To Amundsen, God was an extra companion on the journey, a steady hand on the sled.

We have scant conception, in our cacophonous, instant age, of what travel, and especially polar travel, was like in the early years of the century. As Roland Huntford points out, in that "era of the telegraph and telephone, but not yet of radio . . . isolation descended once the shore had disappeared astern. Conversely, when voyagers vanished out of sight, they were swallowed by oblivion." Amundsen and his men, accustomed to snow and ice and the loneliness of months-long night, were better equipped, spiritually as well as practically, to face the hazards of Antarctica. Their boat was shipshape, their skis polished and packed, their food ample, their dogs well fed and fit. Such tidy tightness was an absolute necessity. In the regions of ice, as Huntford points out, next to the cold, the greatest threat to man is man himself: "Away from the coast, there is no life, and therefore no bacteria; no disease, no pests, no beasts of prey, no mobs, no human interference. It is a clinical environment, where a man survives by his own intelligence and foresight alone."

Scott, on the other hand, had been woefully lax in his preparations for the terrible journey that lay ahead. And, whereas Amundsen had no wife and was free of family responsibilities, Scott had recently married. Kathleen Scott was hardly what one would expect in the wife of an explorer. She was, or at least had a reputation for being, decidedly fast. She was a not untalented sculptor, a friend of Max Beerbohm and J. M. Barrie, and a passionate admirer of Isadora Duncan, with whom she may have had a love affair. Described as "very beautiful, very athletic," and a great flirt to boot, she was, in Huntford's acid formulation, "a predatory female; more predatory than usual, that is." Given all this, the fact that she also had an affair with none other than Fridtjof Nansen should come as less of a surprise than it does. The reason it startles is that it has all the unlikeliness and melodrama of something in a novel by Mrs. Humphrey Ward. Scott, however, was spared the pain of feeling the cuckold's horns spring from his brow; while the attachment was being consummated in a hotel room in Berlin (Huntford is oddly discreet in the matter), Kathleen's husband was freezing to death in his tent in the Antarctic. When news of the disaster that had befallen Scott and his party began to come through, the affair shrivelled in that blast of icy wind from the south.

Amundsen's journey to the Pole was a feat of courage, endurance, and plain skill hardly matched in the annals of adventure. As Huntford points out, his scaling of the vast Transantarctic Mountains with dogs, sleds, and tons of supplies would alone have insured him a place in history. It was a superhuman achievement—and, as it turned out, an unnecessary one, for when his party reached the top Amundsen looked down and saw that, had they travelled along by the foot of the mountains for a few more miles, they could have crossed on the level surface of the Folgefonni Glacier, which swept a broad path through the range. The dogs had been wiser than their master, showing "a decided wish to follow in the old direction, constantly having to be forced into what with hindsight turned out to be a disastrously mistaken course."

Along with the Fram, Amundsen's dogs play a lively role in the story. Amundsen simply loved them. His sense of oneness with nature and her creatures was another trait he shared with Nansen. As Nansen wrote, "if we pay attention to the actually existent forces of nature, and seek to work *with* and not *against* them, we shall thus find the safest and easiest method of reaching the Pole." Scott, on the other hand, regarded nature as an enemy, the great malign mother who must be violated and subjugated. He took dogs on his expedition, despite Sir Clements Markham's edict, but he had a deep misunderstanding of them. To Scott, the dogs were "beasts," to Amundsen his "children," and Scott made a fatal error in relinquishing the pack as he was setting out, by foot and sledge, on the last, agonizing dash to the Pole.

When he got there, the first thing he found was the black flag that Amundsen had left as a signal for him that he had been beaten. Scott knew that Amundsen was in the race, but not that he had won it. That flag must have looked like a mark of mourning for his own death. With his four companions, all of them starving, dehydrated, and suffering from frostbite and scurvy, he turned disconsolately back toward base camp, hundreds of miles away. They did not even reach the depots of food that might have saved them. Captain Lawrence Edward Grace Oates was in the worst condition of the five. It was Scott who recorded him as uttering the famous line "I am just going outside and may be some time." Huntford doubts Oates ever spoke those words; Scott, he wrote, "was preparing his alibi," and implies that he may have been instrumental in driving Oates to his self-sacrificing death, by making it plain that he was holding up the others and perhaps depriving them of a chance to survive. For the record, however, Oates's

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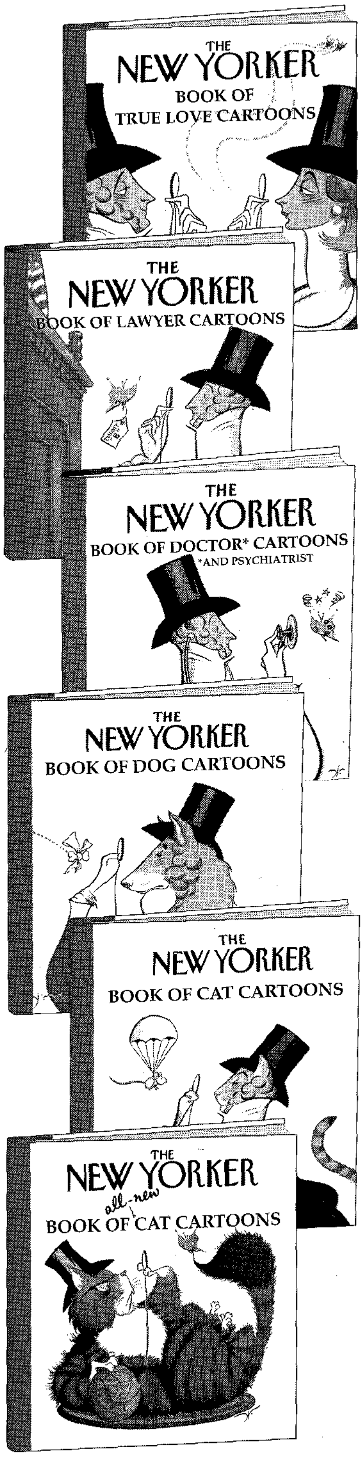
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part of the legend had to be given a "story-book ending." Teddy Evans, Scott's second-in-command, who survived the expedition, put it succinctly in a letter to Oates's mother: "One cannot state facts plainly, when they reflect on the organisation." What a familiar ring that has, in these days of big business and small politics.

Yet Scott died bravely and with dignity. As Amundsen's brother and fund-raiser, Leon, wrote, "Scott has shown us how to die." Scott's vindication of himself succeeded. He was the tragic hero the world took to its heart, while Amundsen was practically ignored. The years went badly for him. He had never been interested in money, and soon he was practically penniless. Death was circling nearer and nearer: Sverre Hassel, who had stood beside him at the Pole, paid him a visit and fell dead at his feet while they were talking; Hjalmer Johansen, Nansen's companion on his ski journey across the Arctic ice, who had been on the journey to the Pole and who, after questioning Amundsen's authority, had been dismissed as second-in-command, committed suicide in a hotel room in Christiania, his only possession a cigar box containing his shaving things.

Amundsen salvaged his reputation when, in 1925, at the age of fifty-three, he made a record-breaking air journey to the farthest point north that anyone had yet flown—eighty-seven degrees forty-four minutes—and spent three weeks on an ice floe before he managed to fly his crew, and the crew of a second plane which had crashed on the journey, back to safety. Three years later, he was summoned from retirement to advise on an attempt to rescue the Italian crew of an airship that had disappeared over the Arctic. Prevented by his own government, at the behest of Mussolini, from leading the rescue operation, he at last persuaded the French authorities to give him a flying boat. On June 18, 1928, he took off and headed north in "the crystal-clear light of a perfect northern summer's day." Shortly afterward, a fisherman off the coast saw the plane fly into a fog bank. Amundsen, his plane, and its crew were never seen again. He had disappeared into the northern mists. For years, there were those who believed that he had survived and would somehow return. And who knows, perhaps one day he will be found, like George Mallory, upright and preserved in some high frozen waste, an ice-bound effigy of himself. ♦

MUSICAL EVENTS

AUSTRIAN NIGHTS

Musical splendor and theatrical squalor in Salzburg.

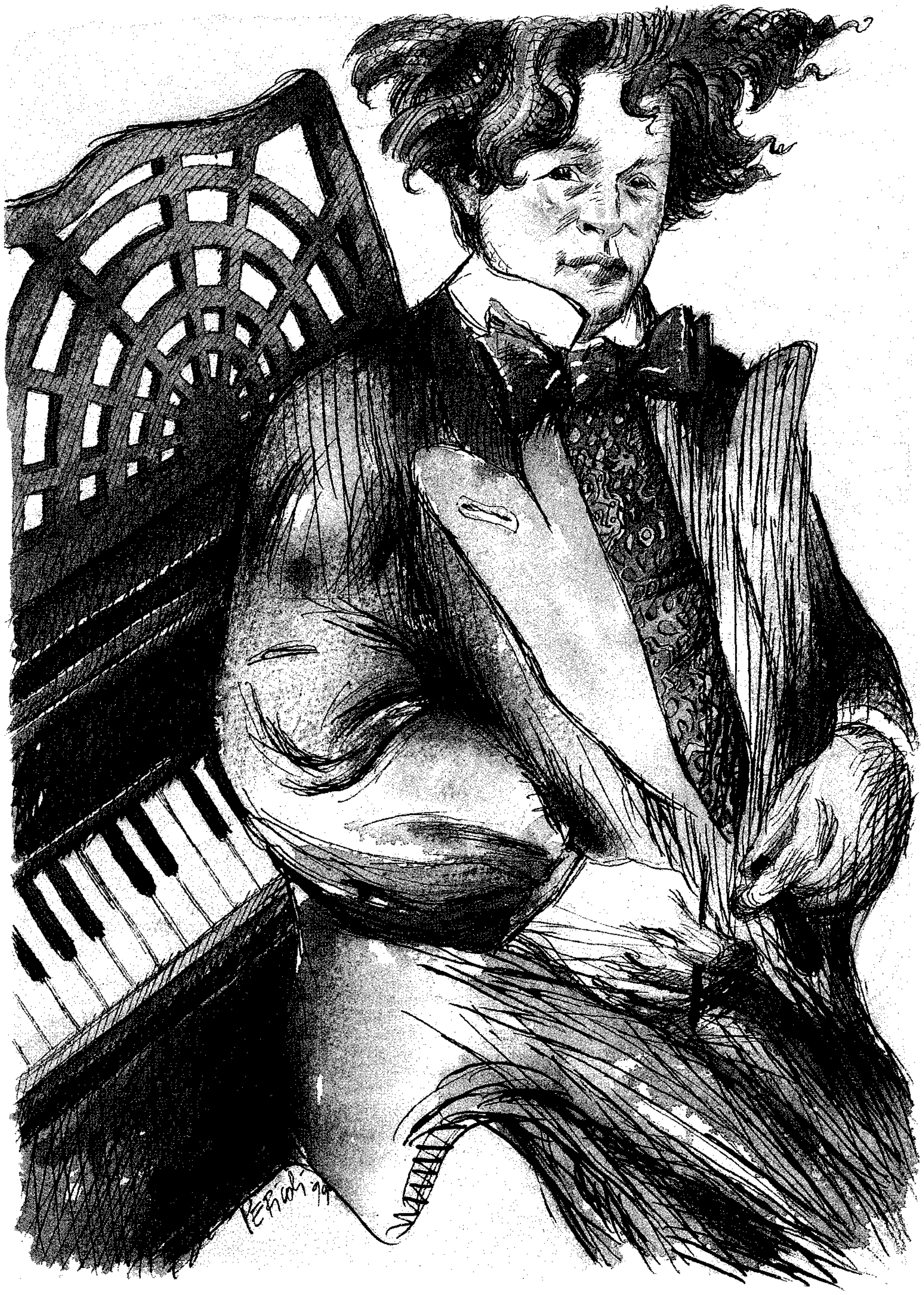
BY ALEX ROSS

AT the end of Ferruccio Busoni's arcane and bewitching opera "Doktor Faust," Mephistopheles assumes the guise of a night watchman and announces, "The weather is changing, frost is in the air." Holding his lantern over the body of Faust, he asks, "Has this man met with some kind of accident?" Both lines catch the mood of this summer's Salzburg Festival, which presented "Doktor Faust" among a galactic welter of musical and dramatic events. Salzburg's patrons were discussing the accident that had befallen Gérard Mortier, the festival's artistic director. After a controversial decade of offbeat programming and high-concept opera productions, it was announced that Mortier would leave his post in 2001. Were his reformist schemes muddling the identity of a festival that had set the standard of classical performance for decades? Or was he being pushed out by a conservative clique, as his supporters claim?

Mortier certainly shook up Salzburg when he took over, in 1992. His predecessor had been Herbert von Karajan, who pleased his stiflingly well-to-do audience with expensive and well-rehearsed productions of familiar operas, especially those of Mozart and Strauss. Suddenly, Mortier was offering cycles of Luigi Nono, operas of Monteverdi and Rameau, grimly postmodern stagings of Mozart, even a new symphony by Philip Glass. The devotees of Karajan were dismayed. Then again the changes may not have been as momentous as they seemed. Salzburg had given a fair number of world premières during the Karajan era, and guest conductors had shown the diversity of taste that Karajan lacked. Karajan, since his death, in 1989, has become something of a synonym for narrow-mindedness, élitism, and corporate display. But nothing I heard at Salzburg this summer could compete with the archival recordings of even his less distinguished festival nights. Karajan's music-making could glow with a warmth that those who met him seldom glimpsed.

Mortier has a genius for programs that look fantastic on paper. The 1999 festival booklet was an encyclopedia of interesting taste. The prospect of a deluxe production of Busoni's "Doktor Faust"—the solitary masterpiece of a maguslike musician who hovers over the early twentieth century like a spider in his web—was enough to send me into the labyrinth of planning a Salzburg trip. The week I was there also included the world première of a new opera by Luciano Berio; an elaborate multi-ensemble series, devised by the pianist Maurizio Pollini, spanning seven centuries of music; a new production of "Don Giovanni," with the world-class cast of Karita Mattila, Dmitri Hvorostovsky, Barbara Frittoli, Bruce Ford, and Franz Hawlata; an all-Haydn concert by the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, under Simon Rattle; and—I was afraid this would be too much—Kent Nagano conducting Mahler's "Das Lied von der Erde" at eleven in the morning.

UNFORTUNATELY, the operas had stagings. Salzburg is still mired in the kind of directorial obscurantism which ran rampant through Europe in the seventies and eighties. The director Peter Mussbach and his set designer, Erich Wonder, mugged "Doktor Faust" right at the start: in the opening scene, as Busoni's score piles up tones in a bell-like blur, Faust is seen as a dirty old



Ferruccio Busoni: His bewitching, rarely heard masterpiece is mired in directorial murk.

TULLIO PERICOLI

man in a hat and coat who stumbles around a huge gray room. Later on, a crowd of identically dressed dirty old men fill the stage, and Faust disappears among them. Mussbach is one of those directors who seem to delight in not merely disregarding the libretto but directly contradicting it. When evil spirits are said to move swiftly, they move slowly. When Faust is supposed to open his book and read his spells, he doesn't, because the book is too heavy. And when the Duke of Parma exclaims, "A splendid sight," we see a row of small gray hills. The performance, under Kent Nagano's direction, was nearly flawless—Thomas Hampson showed both stamina and passion as Faust; Chris Merritt was a nimble, charming Mephistopheles; Nagano and the Vienna Philharmonic mastered Busoni's quicksilver style. But Mussbach's tableaux froze the action at a distance. (The season after next, this "Faust" will arrive at the Met, which co-produced it; drastic changes are necessary.)

A similar misfortune overtook "Don Giovanni," which was directed by Luca Ronconi and designed by Margherita Palli. The contrast between theatrical design and musical action became almost comical. Lorin Maazel, whose behavior can never be predicted in advance, elected to conduct the score in a grand, slow, Mahlerian manner, and, strange to say, he pulled it off. When Donna Elvira sings of a gaping abyss, you could hear it in the orchestra. The cast was, as it promised to be, magnificent. Hvorostovsky was a smooth monster of a Don—a man too phlegmatic to factor in the emotions of others. Mattila, as Donna Anna, kept her plush voice slightly in check; she suggested a woman controlling her rage for the sake of revenge. Frittoli touched something deep with her Donna Elvira; despite moments of shaky coloratura, she created an electric atmosphere of desire and despair. Ford sang Don Ottavio immaculately. But they all were locked in Palli's excruciating sets, which vacillated between featureless ugliness—more gray walls—and lurid caprice. The opera was apparently happening in Italy, in the twenties. Don Giovanni drove a fancy, shiny car. There was also a large digital clock. At one point, many clocks hung in the air, each showing a different time of day. Fresher ideas have been advanced in undergraduate productions of "No Exit."

The new Berio opera, "Cronaca del Luogo," or "Chronicle of a Place," mounted an assault of modernist clichés on all fronts. The libretto was by Berio's wife, Talia Pecker Berio. "There is no story, no plot," she announced in the plot summary. The first scene was described as follows: "Night. R, the piazza, the wall and its voices. Time is captured. Evocation of memory." This gave a flavor of the text, which managed to be both verbose and sparse. There were scenes that had something to do with a nameless city under siege and with a Cassandra-like woman named R. (She was sung by Hildegard Behrens, who was miscast, being too expressive to play a letter of the alphabet.) A construction worker came onstage wearing an elk head and said, "Tables, trombones, pencils, peacocks," among other quaint Dadaist pronouncements. Throughout, Berio composed with the same brilliant, mercurial style he has applied to any number of dramatic situations. Scurrying figuration alternated with drones: four or five sixteenth or thirty-second notes were followed by two or three longer notes. At the end, the chorus sang some slowly shifting chords in the meditative manner of Morton Feldman. Needless to say, Berio does not call his piece an "opera"; it is a "musical action."

The trouble that these productions had in common was an unwillingness to portray character or generate emotion. In "Don Giovanni," the characters were locked in types: Donna Anna was a society dame, Donna Elvira some kind of aging movie star. In "Doktor Faust," Faust and Mephistopheles were dressed alike, and doppelgängers crowded around them. In "Cronaca del Luogo," composer and librettist apparently agreed at the outset to cut character from the picture. The cumulative effect of the three operas was so stultifying that I found myself seconding the complaints that have been levelled at the Mortier regime. Wilhelm Sinkovicz, in the Viennese paper *Die Presse*, said that Mortier exhibited a "nostalgic mania for the beginnings of so-called 'director-theater,' which in truth has been history for a long time." What seemed progressive in the last decade at Salzburg may in fact have been reactionary. And the same criticism could be directed at Mortier's choices in contemporary music. The composers have been, as a rule, dense, atonal, experimental. Messiaen, Gubaidulina, Feldman, and some other mavericks have been admitted, but several more conservative twentieth-century masters have suffered neglect. Only once in its history has Salzburg put on an opera by Benjamin Britten—his "Rape of Lucretia," back in 1950. A certain intellectual parochialism is at work here: a need for philosophical scaffolding around everything; an urge to cite the socio-musicology of Theodor W. Adorno; a fear of simplicity and kitsch. But Berio's "Cronaca del Luogo" turned into avant-garde kitsch on a monumental scale.

The best things I heard in Salzburg were not on the opera stages but in the concert halls. One of Pollini's concerts in the Mozarteum wandered from Josquin Desprez to the contemporary Italian composer Franco Donatoni and back to Schoenberg and Schumann; at the end, Pollini played two of the most phenomenal encores I have ever heard—Chopin's Scherzo in B Minor and Schoenberg's Six Little Pieces, Opus 19. The Chopin, in a way, sounded more violent and more strange. Nagano, whose European reputation now far exceeds his American one, led the Vienna Philharmonic in a "Das Lied von der Erde" that was elegant, unexaggerated, and quietly shattering. Michael Schade barked the tenor songs; Simon Keenlyside sang "Der Abschied" with wisdom and restraint.

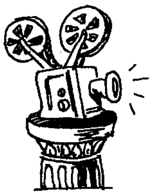
And the British conductor Simon Rattle, showing no signs of self-importance after his recent deification as the next director of the Berlin Philharmonic, conducted an all-Haydn program in which every phrase gave a kick to the next. These were the kinds of day-to-day epiphanies for which people make their annual Salzburg pilgrimages. If Mortier's successor can clear away the encrustation of faddishness, such moments will set the tone for the festival as a whole. It is an important task, since Salzburg still sets the tone for the rest of the musical world. ♦

THE CURRENT CINEMA

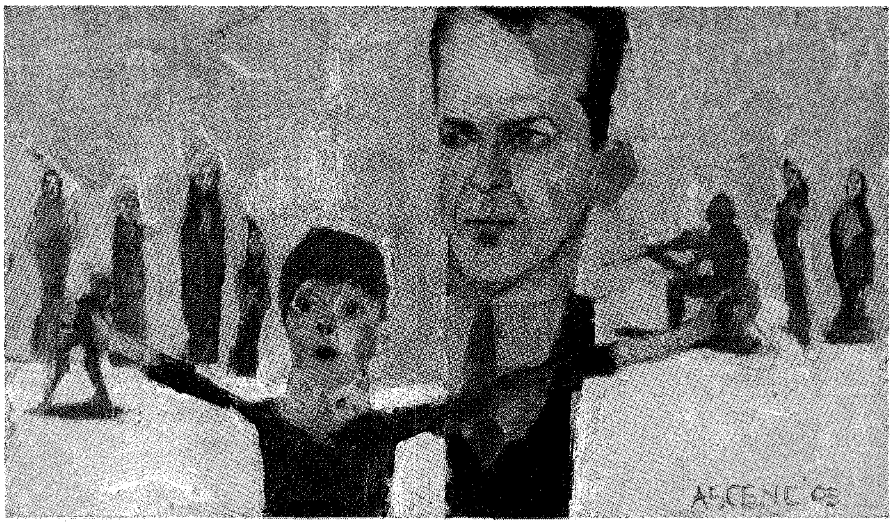
THE SPOOK DOCTOR

A horror film exorcised of cheap thrills.

BY DAVID DENBY



"THE Sixth Sense," a movie made in an easily corrupted genre—the psychological horror film—turns out to be a sombre and emotionally sustained piece of work. The young writer-director M. Night Shyamalan was born in India but grew up in Philadelphia, and, with the aid of the great cinematographer Tak Fujimoto, he uses the dowdy beauties of his home town for whatever they might yield of mortality and sadness. Philadelphia, gray and brown, is caught in a perpetual autumn—it's a true ghost town, a city with the life drained out of it. Shyamalan's hero is a psychologist, Dr. Malcolm Crowe (Bruce Willis), who is dedicated to helping young children with terrible anxieties. One of the patients whom Malcolm was unable to help, now a young man, shows up in anguish at Malcolm's house, plugs him with a revolver,



Willis with Haley Joel Osment, whose haunted face dominates "The Sixth Sense."

N. ASCENCIOS

and then kills himself. The story resumes the following year. Malcolm is a different person, and his wife, Anna (Olivia Williams), who adores him, appears to be alienated from what he's become—a doctor obsessed with a single patient, a terrified nine-year-old boy who Malcolm thinks is very much like the young man with the gun. The child, Cole Sear (Haley Joel Osment), is frightened when he's alone but won't say why. Most of the movie consists of long conversations between Bruce Willis and Haley Joel Osment, who has been acting since the age of five (he is now eleven). Willis, in one of his non-smirking performances, is as serious and patient as a deacon. He does well enough, but the movie is ruled by Osment's face, which is extraordinary—pale, with a pointed chin, a tiny mouth with a curling upper lip, and eyes that go red at the rims with fear. His Cole, who is literally haunted, can't bear to be looked at; he has the face of an orphaned war child who has hidden from too many bombs, and you feel raked by his gaze. When you consider that a good part of the audience for a movie like this wants to shed the emotions of sympathy and identification altogether and escape into ghoulish rapture, Osment's ability to make the audience care about Cole is all the more striking.

I've spent a fair part of my life ridiculing spook movies and deep-think "spiritual" movies and (worst of all) "religious" horror movies, like "The Exorcist" and "The Omen"—the kind of pictures that exploit the torture of children under the guise of protesting the torture of children. As a moviegoer, I'm more easily and unhappily scared than a nun; I hate things jumping out of the dark—the cheap, arbitrary terror tactics of generations of ruthless directors. But this summer's horror-film sensation, "The Blair Witch Project," worked for me. A seeming documentary, it traps the viewer in the footage that its three (fictional) film students have shot in the Maryland woods—we see nothing but what they record. For all its cruddy-looking, hand-held blurs, the movie is an exhilarating ride. The very cinematic means by which it exists at all is precisely what creates the fear. "Blair Witch" is good scary, inventive scary, and so is "The Sixth Sense," though Shyamalan (pronounced *Sha*-ma-lahn) works in a more conventional way. You see the child, and eventually you see, in the same frame, what it is that is frightening him. Things do pop out of the dark, and John Newton Howard's musical effects—the premonitory swells and glissandos, and the hollow-sounding cracking noises—add a clichéd chill every time something bad is happening. But Shyamalan is clearly an earnest fellow, and when the movie tries for emotion it succeeds. "The Sixth Sense," despite an occasional hackneyed "Boo!," is a humanist horror film.

The doctor hopes to get the boy to tell him his secrets, and the boy resists, because he doesn't think Malcolm can help him. They struggle like the ambitious shrink and doubting patient in many a well-meaning movie, but this time with an element of the uncanny added. When Cole is alone at home, the room turns cold, his breath becomes visible, and something is definitely creeping about in the hall. Cole finally confesses: He sees dead people. They come and find him; they scare him. He talks about the ghosts to Malcolm as if they were fear itself—they are the thing that makes the hairs on the back of one's neck stand up. Are they figments of his imagination? Like other serious ghost tales, "The Sixth Sense" is elaborately ambiguous. Cole could be paranoid, delusional—his doctor certainly thinks so, at least at first. After all, Cole's father has run off, and his mother, a loving but unimaginative woman (Toni Collette), can't fathom the brilliant little boy who seems to see and know more than he should. Collette, the Australian actress from "Muriel's Wedding," matches up beautifully with Osment—she has the same curling upper lip. Her face is almost as unhappy as his, and their scenes together at home, when they confront each other at the dinner table, have a fine, unstable moodiness. They could be just another screwed-up family.

But of course there's more to it than that: the skeptic who thinks that there's nothing really strange going on has to be disabused of his skepticism. In the meantime, *we* know the ghosts are real. As soon as Cole admits his nightmare, we also begin seeing the creatures—women mostly, each bearing her wounds and her rage. They are all people who have died violently, and that, presumably, is why they are haunting poor Philadelphia, turning the place gray with their secrets and miseries. Shyamalan films them with just enough immediacy that they scare us but not so much that they cause

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disgust. These ghouls are not special-effects triumphs but normal poltergeists, everyday victims of mayhem, and what they want from the boy—some sort of help—grows more and more explicit. Finally, in a shocking sequence, a dead girl presents Cole with a videotape revealing how she was murdered. A hack director scares us by gross mechanical means or by playing on common superstitions and childhood fears. But Shyamalan does something harder—he builds up an entire structure of reality in which one tiny element after another is subtly altered. "The Sixth Sense" is a puzzle movie, and when the pieces fall into place, explaining everything that we haven't understood earlier, we get a genuine thrill of horror—a true charge of the uncanny.

We have to be patient along the way. Except for one or two scenes, the movie proceeds with solemn gravity. Shyamalan works in silence, or in a dreamy half murmur, and some things are done very gently—for instance, the growing emotional distance between the doctor and his wife. Olivia Williams (she was the teacher in "Rushmore") has a lovely rounded face; she's so demure and soft-voiced that she seems a little ghostly herself. This movie is not a great work, but it's all of a piece, an attempt by a talented twenty-eight-year-old writer-director to find his way, and I see no justification for the adjectives some critics have turned against it—"ponderous" and "mawkish." Do all horror films have to take the top of your head off? I can't help wondering if the critics complaining of mawkishness are punishing Shyamalan for making them feel more than they want to.

FREUD wrote that sensations of the uncanny were produced by an unexpected return of the repressed. I don't know if the Watergate scandal has been repressed, but it returns in "Dick" in a way that's fairly close to uncanny—altered, reinvented, indeed translated as thoroughly as Nick Bottom is translated into an ass. "Dick" depends on a gimmick that rises to semi-magic. It turns out that back there in 1972 a couple of silly-goose teen-age girls—Arlene (Michelle Williams), who is troubled and melodramatic, and Betsy (Kirsten Dunst), who's a little too slick but a good egg—meet President Nixon (Dan Hedaya) during a tour of the White House and become the walkers of the President's dog, King Timahoe, whom he insists on calling Checkers. The girls, who have free access to the place, keep stumbling in their ignorance into strange scenes—documents being shredded, flustered aides like Bob Haldeman (Dave Foley) and John Dean (Jim Breuer) scurrying in and out of the Oval Office. They never do figure out what's going on, but they become key players anyway, destroying Nixon because he outrages their sense of decency; for God's sake, he mistreats his *dog*. The movie attaches foolish fiction to the willing contours of reality—in this new secret history of Watergate, all mysteries get cleared up, including the identity of Deep Throat. The movie, directed by Andrew Fleming, plays as farce, and some of the jokes are too simple and the performers (mainly veterans of "Saturday Night Live" and the Canadian "Kids in the Hall") too casually goofy. I can't take much satisfaction in seeing, say, Woodward and Bernstein turned into jerks, as they are here. But the central comic idea of unconscious goodness flummoxing calculated evil is a sound one, and it's great fun to watch Fleming (who wrote the screenplay with Sheryl Longin) inject his two chattering ninnies into these familiar events, like taffy under the hood. The movie is shot in bright, candy colors, and the girls are like something from a seventies sitcom: "Dick" could be called the revenge of pop culture on history. Dan Hedaya's performance as Nixon is the one element that goes beyond spoof. Hedaya has a weighted yet cringing massiveness around the shoulders and head, an alarming extra bulk shifting wildly for lack of adequate purpose. He makes Nixon a physically desperate man, and, for all his temper and menace, an ineffably sad one, too. ♦

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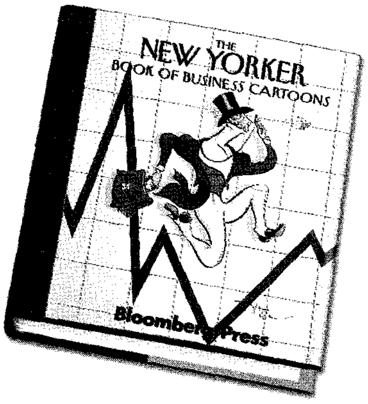

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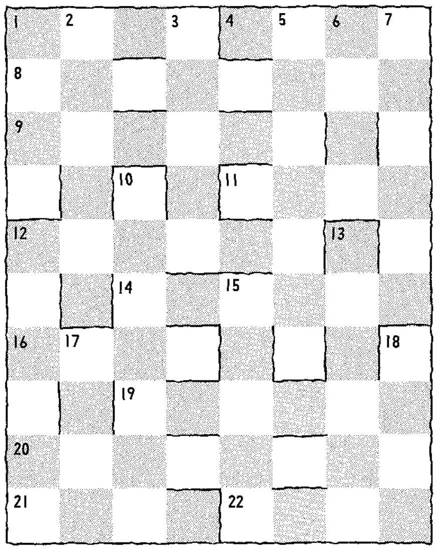

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• •

EDITORS' NOTE: This will be the last 8 x 10 Cryptic. The solution to puzzle No. 100 appears on page 189; puzzle No. 101's solution will be printed in the next issue.

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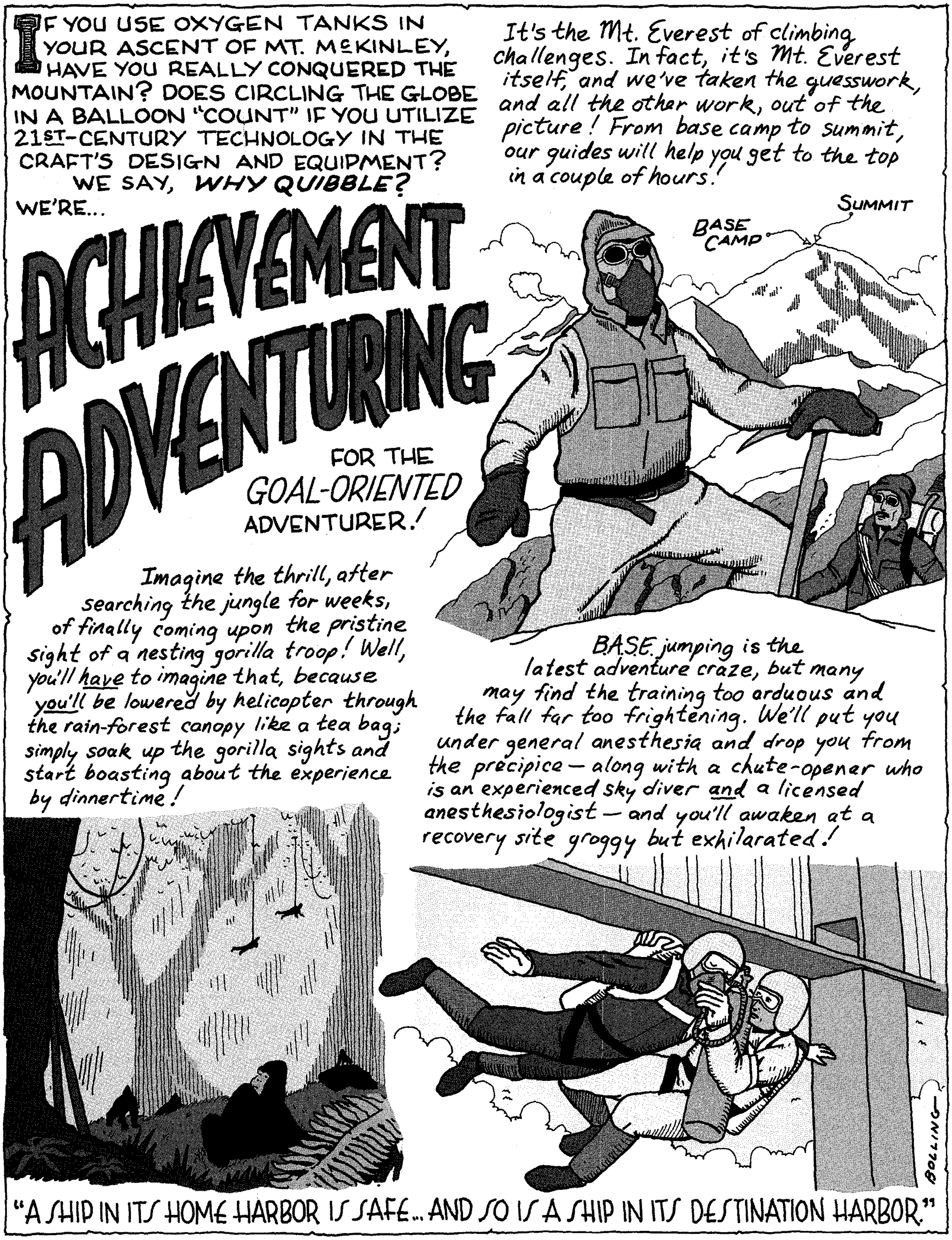
THE BACK PAGE BY RUBEN BOLLING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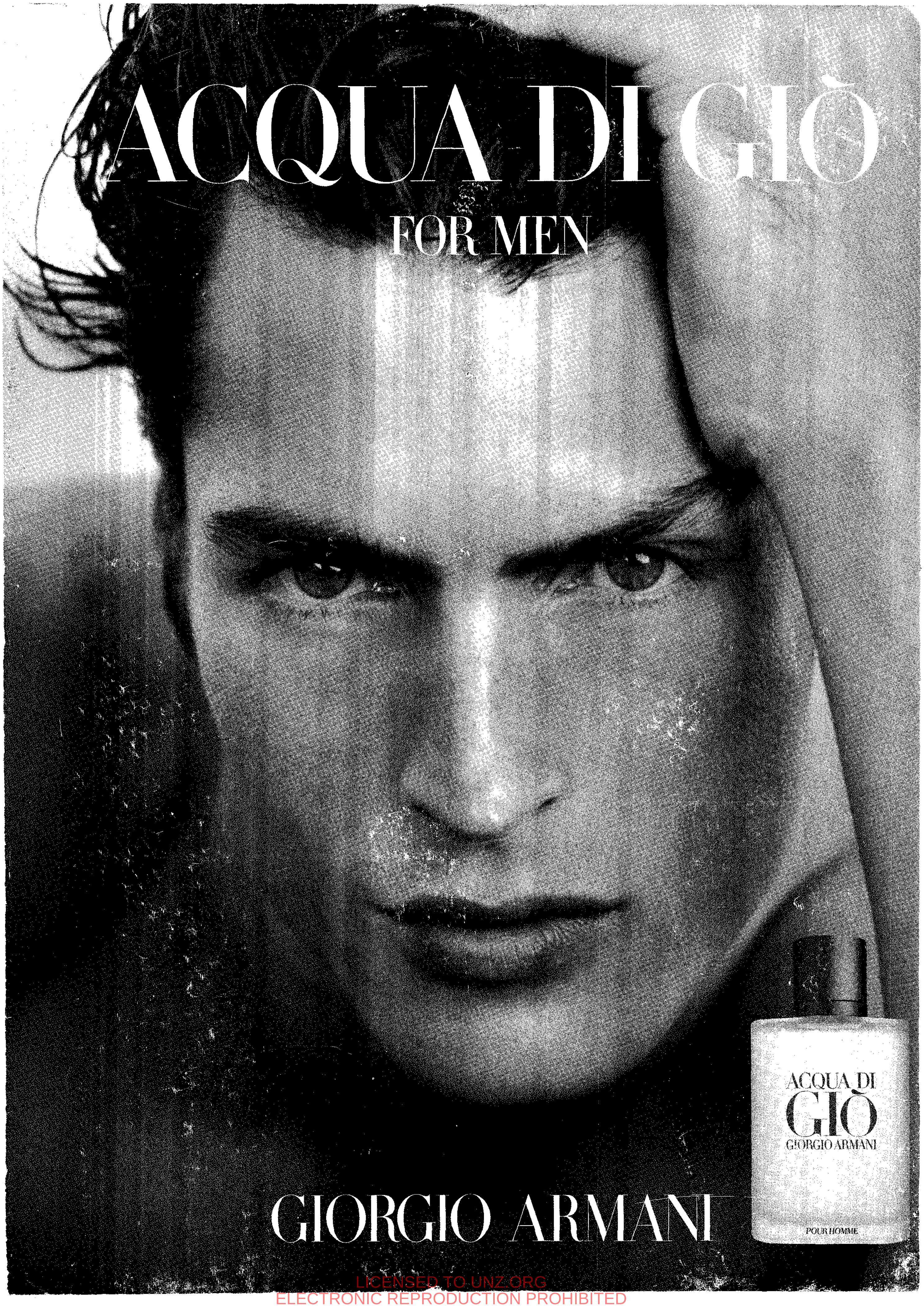
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